



Annual Report



2022-2023

Director's Report

The last academic year has been really encouraging. It was more 'normal' than the previous three years as there was no pandemic to contend with. The Christmas Journey and The Easter Journey happened as normal, although schools were given the option of accessing the online videos to watch at school or to visit a church. Assemblies continued, and more schools have asked for in-person assemblies as they have relaxed restrictions imposed during Covid.

We completed The Harvest Journey for year 1; our first purely online Journey. Cathy and Natalie wrote the journey, filmed, edited it and produced a teacher's resource booklet and a children's notebook. They worked hard to find age-appropriate activities and crafts which could be tailored according to each child's needs. Positively, one school which we have little contact with, emailed us in August 2023 to ask whether we had a harvest resource for year 1. In September, the journey was piloted in three schools to which we received good feedback.

Although the year was 'normal', with our usual work, we also had to find a new office space and wrestle with depleting finances. The office at St Paul's church provided us with a lot of storage, and after visiting a few different office spaces we realised that we had to 'downsize' (see 'Moving Offices' page). It was hard work, and the three of us based in Stevenage worked extra hours to get the move done, but I'm delighted to say it went smoothly and we have settled in well to The United Reformed Church. Many thanks to those who helped us move physically, as well as those who helped in the run up to the move. In the midst of the move we also sadly said 'goodbye' to Natalie who stopped working for Bridge Builders in June 2023. We pray that her marriage and move to Norfolk bring much joy!

Our grateful thanks go to those who responded to our appeal in February 2023. The trustees did a wonderful job going to many local churches, and the gifts that were given at that point have made a huge difference, so thank you for all your support!

Steph Knell

Director

Moving offices....

This sounds simple but it involved....

Sorting and disposing
of accumulated
resources collected
for over 20 years.

Selling multiple
items, including
furniture, on eBay
and Facebook
Marketplace

Re-organising The
Christmas Journey and
The Easter Journey
resource boxes to be
stored in the garages

Many trips to
charity shops
by volunteers,
staff and
trustees

Organising a table
top sale and running
it over 2 days.

And doing our usual
work ---
**all in 2 days a
week!**

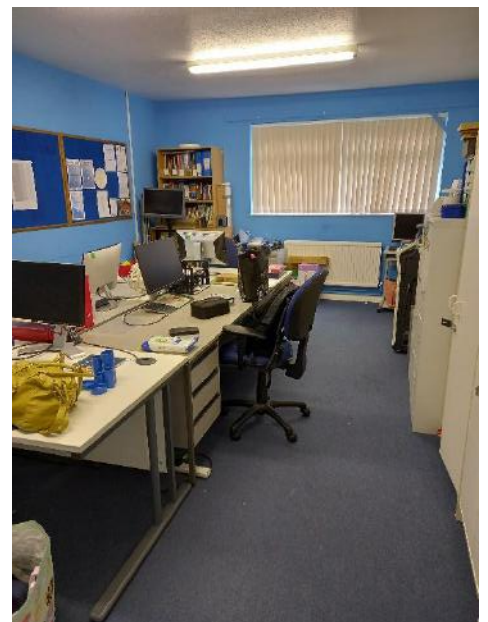
BUT.... The hard work paid off. When we moved to our new offices, the furniture fitted in and we unpacked it all in 2 days. One big answer to prayer was that the printer immediately connected to both the internet and to our computers. Phew!

THANK YOU so much to everyone who helped!

The Old Office on moving day including a manoeuvre to get the stationery cupboard down the stairs!



The New Office at
The United Reformed Church



Building on the success of the Christmas and Easter online Journeys, The Reach project aims to produce an online interactive Journey for each and every year group throughout primary school, reaching upwards of 10,000 children **EACH** year!

The format for the journeys will be three short video clips explaining a Bible based concept followed by three activities to enhance the children's understanding and to encourage them to think about the issues raised. All the content is tied into the Hertfordshire R.E. curriculum.



This year we have focused on producing The Harvest Journey for year one children, to be piloted in schools early in the Autumn 2023 term.

Also, this year The Journey for year six children based on the book of Acts and relating to secondary school transition is nearly complete. This will be piloted in the summer term 2024.

Coming up....

A creation themed Journey for year three children, and life of Jesus Journey for year four children.



TARGET - £21,000



PRAYER



DONATE

Fundraising

We rely on donations to keep our work going. We cover the £8 cost for each child who attends one of our journeys. There are many different ways in which you can support us:

ONE-OFF
GIFT ★



Shopping online, select Bridge Builders as your beneficiary and we will receive a donation for every £1 you spend

If you're a UK taxpayer completing a Gift Aid Declaration means your donation is worth 25% more.



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Assemblies

Assemblies are a great way for us to spread the message of the Bible through fun, interactive stories and games and they allow us to have regular contact every half term with over 1500 children. Each assembly is only 15 minutes long but we always

- Ask the children questions
- Have children up front to help with anything from holding items for the story through to playing a game
- Talk about Jesus

Our assemblies are designed to not only give the children information about the Bible, but also to inspire them to take the message of the assembly out into their everyday lives.

We want to plant a seed in the hearts and minds of the children that we speak to about the true nature of God, and also encourage them to live out the values that we're discussing in each assembly, such as kindness, change, perseverance, and so much more.

We want our assemblies to have a lasting impact, and for the children to remember them for years to come, which is why we make our assemblies as fun and interactive as possible. We always receive a very warm reception from the children as they remember previous assemblies, and the fun that was had.

In September 2023 Angela joined the Bridge Builders team as ExploRE Manager with a main focus on assemblies. This will allow us to spend more time and attention on assemblies and means we can reach out to schools that we had contact with pre-covid, but who have yet to invite us back, as well as those who haven't had a Bridge Builders assembly for many years.

Please pray that our reaching out will be successful, and that we're able to make contact with more schools and children on a regular basis.



In the Christmas assembly in 2022 the children particularly enjoyed putting together a nativity scene as we told the story of Brother Froilan who carved the figures of the Nativity scene. A beautiful ceramic Nativity set was donated to us just as we needed it for this assembly.



Friends of Bridge Builders

believe Bridge Builders Christian Trust has a significant role to play in Stevenage and the surrounding area and commit to supporting its ongoing work.

- Some Friends of Bridge Builders may choose to offer *practical skills* to support one off events such as cake baking, IT, carpentry, sewing or serving teas and coffees.
- *Prayer support* for all aspects of the Trust's work is vital. Regular updates will be circulated to those Friends who choose to receive them.



If you would like more information, or would like to attend the monthly prayer meetings, please contact the Bridge Builders office. Either phone us on 01438 314314 or email us at admin@bridgebuilderstrust.org.uk.

Volunteer



At Bridge Builders our volunteers are a huge part of our ministry. The time and skills of our volunteers are a valuable resource, helping us with a wide range of tasks throughout the year.

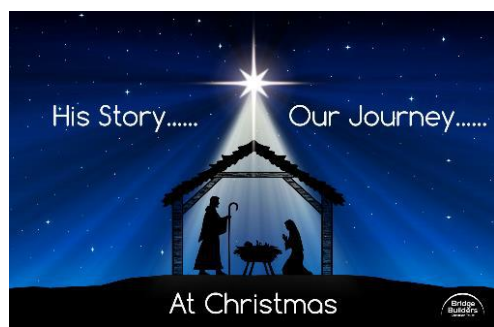
In particular, the REach project needs a number of volunteers, including one off roles such as appearing in one of the videos, to regular weekly volunteering preparing craft materials and other resources for The Journeys.

Contact our office to find out more about our volunteering opportunities. We would love for you to be involved in our ministry work, helping to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with children across Stevenage.

Many Thanks

Broadwater Fair Trading, Bunyan Baptist Church, Churches Together In Stevenage, Grace Community Church, Hertfordshire County Council, Holy Trinity, Prudhoe PCC, Royal British Legion, St. Hugh & St. John, St Ippolyts, St Martin's Knebworth, St. Mary's Graveley, St. Mary's Shephall, St. Nicholas, St. Peter's Church Tewin, St Peter's Church Broadwater, Sirius Digital Solutions, Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Churches Inter-denominational Missionary Project, Stevenage Family History Society, Trinity Church Knebworth, United Reformed Church, Verulam Trust and individual donors for your generous support, .

The Christmas Journey



The Christmas Journey is an interactive event for children in primary school year two.

During the COVID pandemic we produced The Christmas Journey as a series of video clips which could be accessed by schools online. In 2022 we offered the schools a choice; to visit a local church hosting this amazing event or the option to use the videos in school (with all craft supplies delivered beforehand).

964 children took part in The Christmas Journey

Either way, the children travel back in time to meet the characters involved in that first Christmas event. They meet the shepherds who tell them about the angels, the Wise Men who talk about the star, and Anna and Simeon who express their joy at meeting Jesus. Each child has a special Journey notebook in which they complete an activity after meeting each of the characters to remind them of what was said. They also get to decorate their very own crown. At the finale, they meet Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus before singing a lively song.

We are so grateful to all the volunteers, the hosting churches, and also to the local councillors who donated to fund the craft activities.

One teacher commented : 'All stations are just the right balance of listening/learning activity to keep children's focus. I look forward to this trip every year!'

The Easter Journey



The Easter Journey is an interactive event for children in primary school years five or six.

Like the Christmas Journey, schools were given the option to either attend the event hosted by a local church or to remain in the classroom and use online video clips together with craft materials Bridge Builders provided.

903 children participated in the Easter Journey...

... and they heard about the teachings and miracles of Jesus and the events of Holy Week, starting with Palm Sunday. They found out about Jesus's life, teaching and death, and heard about Jesus's resurrection appearances to his disciples. They were encouraged to think and ask questions, as well as consider and explore: 'Why was Jesus a Saviour?' and 'Why did He die?'

A Catholic teacher said that a highlight was 'To see all of our children engaged in all aspects of all the activities,' and he reflected that the way it was done 'allowed wider, relaxed conversation about the main themes.'

We were very encouraged by feedback from teachers (see quote above) when some churches took up the option to use our online videos rather than having four areas with narrators in each area. The whole class watched each clip before splitting into groups to discuss with a volunteer what they had heard. They each had a notebook as a reminder of the Journey to take back school.



If you wish to have a peek at our Journeys please visit our Bridge Builders YouTube channel.

Psalm 107:29

He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.

I, like many, have enjoyed being part of The Christmas Journey which delivers the Christmas story to 6-7 year olds. My first experience was one of wonder at how marvellously organised it was. The efforts gone in to creating environments where the characters from the Christmas story would retell their tale to the eager, wide-eyed children.

Bridge Builders is more than the Christmas or Easter Journey, but it may be what most people think of when you mention "Bridge Builders." Through relationships forged with schools and local church ministers, Bridge Builders are invited to hold assemblies twice a term at primary schools across Stevenage. This allows us to reach out and speak with many primary aged children. This work is immeasurably valuable in spreading God's word.

This past year, Bridge Builders, like Jesus' disciples, faced many storms yet held on to faith, and kept their eyes on the Lord. One of the changes is that Anthony, our Chair of trustees, stepped down as a trustee. We are very grateful to Anthony for his work over the years especially steering the ship through the pandemic. I have stepped into the role of Acting Chair and, with the support of Steph as Director and my fellow trustees, we strive to ensure Bridge Builders' work is a constant presence in schools across Stevenage and neighbouring villages. We can only do this through the dedication of the volunteers who do so much work behind the scenes with preparing craft, packing boxes and more. For that, we as trustees are grateful. The staff who work laboriously in the office do an amazing job to whom we too, are so very grateful for their toil.

There have been staffing changes and location changes bringing much extra work for the volunteers and office team. We give thanks to St Paul's Methodist for the use of their office space for many years and now look forward to many productive years at the new office location of the United Reformed Church.

We have much to be thankful for and we also have hope for the future. The team have been hard at work on a new virtual Harvest Journey, aimed at 5-6 year olds, which was delivered in September 2023 to a select number of schools as a pilot. The team are hard at work on another journey as part of the REach program.

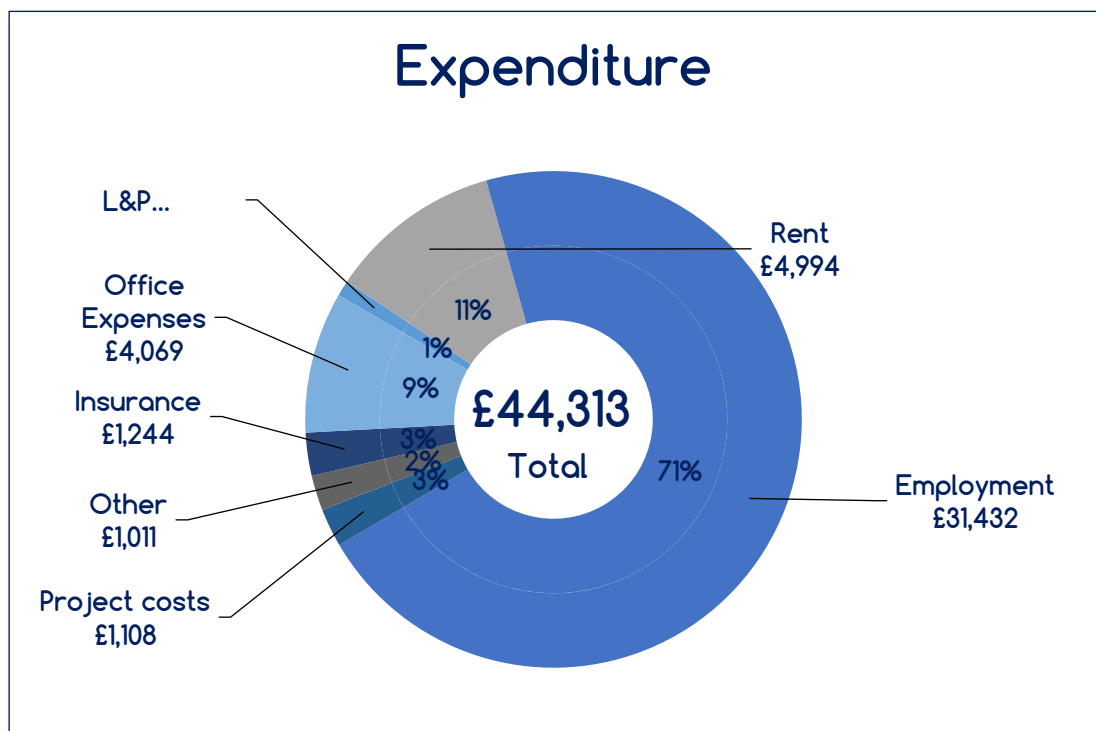
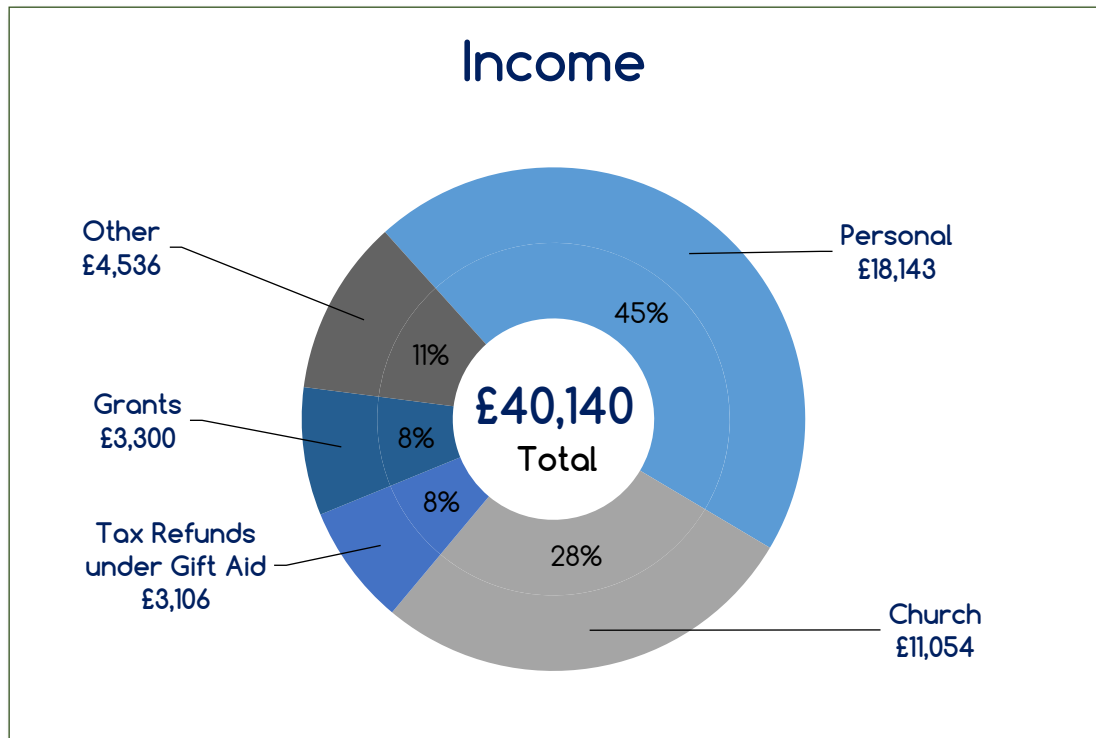
We are ever grateful for the support from local churches, schools, patrons, individual donors, Friends of Bridge Builders... for all their encouragement, prayerful support and to all who play a part within Bridge Builders. We hope you too are encouraged by the work of Bridge Builders and will look to support them generously in whichever way you can. God bless.

Lynne Lee-Diep

Acting Chair of Trustees

Accounts

Income and Expenditure (£) for the Year Ended 31 August 2023



The Team

Staff Team

Mrs Stephanie Knell—Director

Mrs Janice Hawketts—Finance and IT Manager

Mrs Natalie Birch (nee James)—ExploRE Manager (left June 2023)

Mrs Cathy Beach – ExploRE Manager

Mrs Amanda Bryant—Communications Officer and Administrator

Miss Angela Paterson – ExploRE Manager (started September 2023)

Trustees

Mr Anthony Taylor (Chair) (resigned December 2022)

Mrs Lynne Lee-Diep (acting Chair from January 2023)

Mr Peter Gordon

Mrs Penny Paton

Mrs Helen Gale

Rev Margaret MacCarthy

Mr Andrew Brown (started September 2023)



www.bridgebuilderstrust.org.uk



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