



Annual Report



A nativity made by a student at Cambridge Regional College for our silent auction at Christmas in 2023.



2023-2024

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Many Thanks

Benefact Trust, Broadwater Fair Trading, Bunyan Baptist Church, Cambridge Regional College, Churches Together In Stevenage, Grace Community Church, Hertfordshire County Council, Herts Police Choir, Holy Trinity, Prudhoe PCC, Royal British Legion, St. Hugh & St. John, St Ippolyts Church, 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 Family History Society, Trinity Church Knebworth, United Reformed Church, Verulam House Trust, Welwyn Garden City Band and individual donors for your support.

Director's Report

We have enjoyed a more settled year at Bridge Builders. The new office is light, nice to work in, and in a great location. There have been a few ups and downs, as there always will be, but they have been navigated well!

In September 2023, we welcomed Angela Paterson to the team to lead our assembly provision. She worked hard and enjoyed engaging with the children. We were sad when she resigned in April 2024 but rejoice with her as she got a job in a local primary school. We have recruited two people, one to fill the gap that Angela left, and the other to run The Christmas and Easter Journeys. It was great to welcome Gemma Campbell in July as Assembly Manager, and she will also help with Journeys. Lynn Lee-Diep started in September 2024 as The Christmas and Easter Journey Manager and also helps with assemblies. We are so thankful to the Lord for providing for our needs.

The Christmas Journey was very successful, and we were also happy to provide various nativity costumes for local churches to use at Christmas. The Easter Journey saw over 1300 children access it – more than we have had before. The newer version of The Easter Journey, using the videos we recorded over lockdown, has been so successful that all churches will use it in 2025. It has a greater impact, and the children engage better.

We piloted the first Journey for the REach Project – The Harvest Journey for year 1. 210 children took part, from four different schools in the local area. It was well received, and we were pleased to receive positive feedback, as well as one or two things which could have gone better. Cathy has also written and recorded a Journey for year 6, focusing on the book of Acts, and thinking about change and transition as year 6 prepare for secondary school. One activity is to make a 'memory box', and one teacher wrote, 'The children loved the memory box idea and signed each other's boxes. They also had great ideas about what they could keep in the box.'

Our thanks as always to the many churches, church ministers and volunteers who have been involved with Bridge Builders this year. Our projects only run because of you! A special thanks to The Verulam House Fund Trust who continue to financially support the REach project, as well as to all of you who give towards our work. We are involved in mission – the majority of children have never been in a church, and will never go into a church, and although Christianity is taught in schools, we have an opportunity to make Jesus real for all the children in Stevenage and the surrounding villages.

Steph Knell

Director

Finance

In the year to 31st August 2024 the Trust had income of £40,853 and expenditures of £34,621 leaving a surplus in the year of £6,231.

The income is derived mainly from personal giving including associated Gift Aid £22,237 & from local partnering churches, £11,532. Our REach Project was awarded a £3k grant from The Verulam House Fund Trust of which £2k was split between two financial years; £2k is accounted for in this Financial Year. Local councillors gave grants totaling £800 towards purchasing crafts for The Christmas Journey & The Easter Journey.

Local fundraising events contribute to the “Other Income” figure along with bank interest, printing income (from printing we do for other non-profits), Christmas card sales, resource loan income & online fundraising income e.g. [Easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)

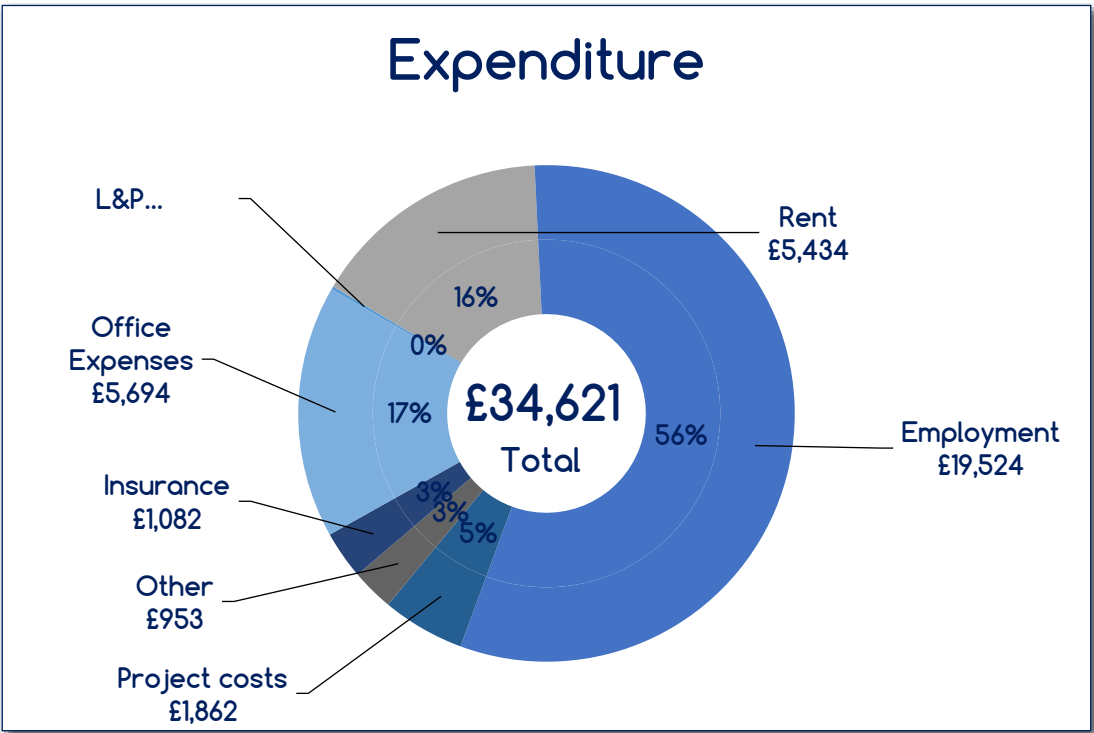
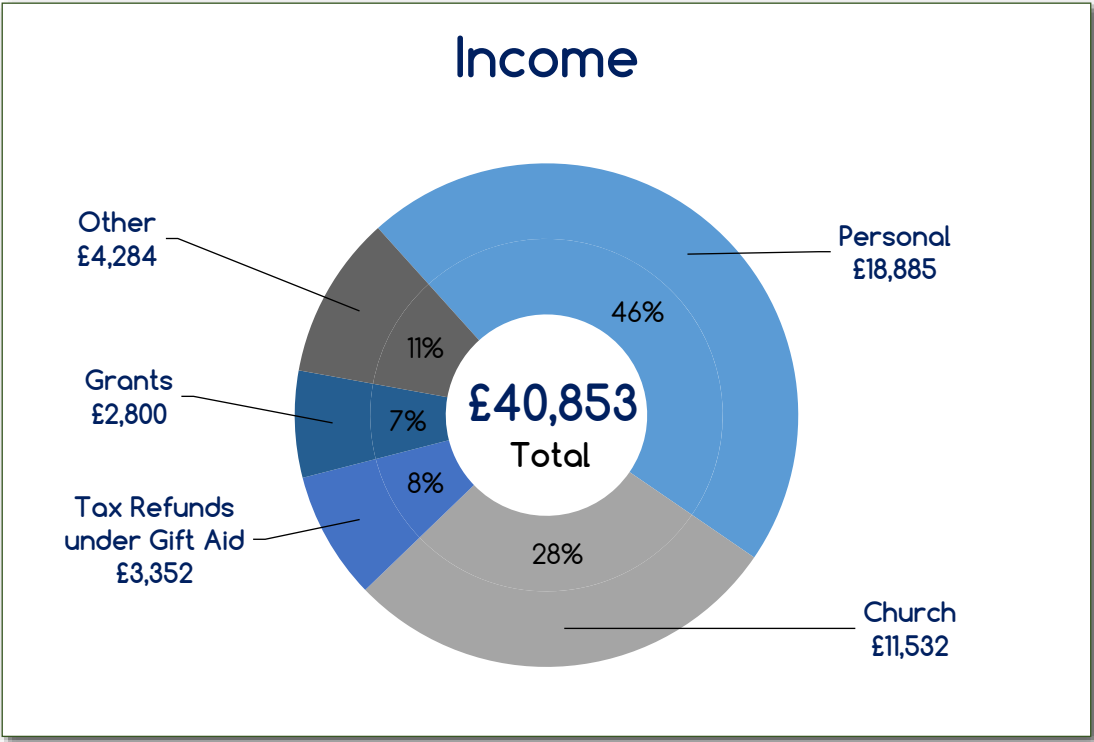
Expenditure in the year was mainly for payroll costs, £19,524; Office Expenses, £5,694; Rent for the office, £5,434; Insurance £1,082 & HR consultancy £72.

Reporting a surplus for the year is encouraging, especially as this was mainly due to our income being above budget and our expenditure being on budget. Payroll costs are always our highest single expense, but this year the overall cost was almost £12k less than the previous year. There are two main reasons for this. The first is due to staff changes; the Director came off the payroll in Feb and another staff member resigned in April. The second reason is that in financial year 2022/23, three staff members agreed to take a cut in hours (two by over half) in order to produce the balance budget for FY23/24 which would also include taking on someone to do the Assemblies role for ten hours per week.

Trustees agreed to a partial reinstatement of hours for one staff member from April 2024 and for the recruitment of staff to lead the Journeys projects and Assemblies starting in the next financial & academic year.

Accounts

Income and Expenditure (£) for the Year Ended 31 August 2024



Fundraising

Bridge Builders Christian Trust's work in primary schools in Stevenage and surrounding area is completely free of charge, and we want to keep it that way.

The fundraising process at Bridge Builders is rather like a fork with four tines! There are four approaches to our fundraising strategy:

- online donations and purchases via different fundraising platforms
- local fundraising events hosted by churches and other supporting groups
- applications to grant funders
- regular monthly giving by individuals and our partner churches.

Below, you will see opportunities for online platforms, direct giving (regular or one off) and monthly giving. There is also a report on local fundraising events for Bridge Builders in the last year, as well as our successful grant applications.

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ORDER**

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.

 [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)
feel good shopping


Stewardship
Active generosity

giftaid

Grant Funding



We were successful in our applications to the Verulam House Fund Trust who awarded us a grant of £3,000 and The Hockerill Foundation who also awarded us a grant of £3,000 towards our REach project in primary schools. As both of these awards are for the next academic year, they will not be shown in the accounts this year. Following a grant award, we are obliged to provide a report about how we spent the money, and how the project is progressing. We provide detailed data including the number of schools/children who attended a pilot or launch, and how the project was monitored, resourced and delivered. We also give feedback from the school staff, children, and ministers or church leaders who attended.

Local Fundraising



Welwyn Garden City Band Festive Concert at St Nicholas Church, Stevenage



Amanda receiving the hand-made Nativity for our Silent Auction.

We are so grateful for the many churches and individuals who host and attend local fundraising events for Bridge Builders. Throughout the year, there were a variety of events, including a quiz and cake evening, a range of concerts, a silent auction, a coffee morning, a tabletop sale, and we sold Christmas cards in local churches. Overall, £2327 was raised for Bridge Builders!

If you would like to host a fundraising event on behalf of Bridge Builders please get in touch admin@bridgebuilderstrust.org.uk we would love to hear from you!

Chair's Report

Psalm 46:1 (NIV)

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46 is a reminder that in whatever troubles we face, God never deserts us. God provided a new office in July 2023. He blessed us with the appointment of a new Assemblies Manager as Angela came on board in September. There was uncertainty as to what would happen if the vacancy had not filled.

At times there has been anxiety and fear. Is the work of Bridge Builders going to be well received by the local schools? Is there a happy balance between income and expenditure? Is the office coping with the demand that is required? We give thanks to the Lord for his faithfulness and provision. His guidance and protection when the outlook seems bleak. He is the calm in our storm.

New trustees joined the board this year. Andy Brown, headteacher of a primary school, joined us September 2023 and has been invaluable as he brings knowledge from a school perspective. Jon Woodrow, pastor of Grace Community Church has also joined the trustee board. It's great having trustees from a range of churches within Stevenage. We are encouraged and look forward to sharing wisdom and knowledge as we lead Bridge Builders with God's guidance.

Thank you to the office team and the Tuesday volunteers who have worked hard all year to provide resources for the schools in response to the increased uptake of The Christmas and Easter Journeys. Assemblies also continued through the year, and thanks to church ministers who stepped in to deliver assemblies in the summer term when we didn't have an Assembly Manager – their tireless efforts have helped to bring the message of hope to children across Stevenage and beyond.

Summer term is a busy time in the school calendar and that was also the case in Bridge Builders too! Not only was there the need to fill managerial vacancies for Assemblies and The Journeys, the REach project was also expanding – The Adventure Journey was piloted. This online Journey is aimed at year 6 pupils.

It was exciting that the vacancy for a manager for Assemblies and Journeys was filled and 2 new members of staff joined the Bridge Builders office. I applied for one of the roles, and as I was appointed, I am stepping down as a trustee. My time as a trustee has ended and I thank my fellow trustees for their support, help and guidance. I am excited to be working in the Bridge Builders office and look forward to 'pushing up my shirt sleeves' and getting stuck in!

The work of Bridge Builders is only possible through the generosity of our donors, supporters, partner churches, councillors and grant funders. We also thank all those who support us in pray and by volunteering. May God continue to bless and provide for the work of Bridge Builders. If you are able to support Bridge Builders in any way, your help would be most welcome. God bless.

Lynne Lee-Diep

Acting Chair of Trustees

IT



Network Attached Storage (NAS)

Although this small black box that sits in the corner of our office does not look very exciting, it serves a very useful purpose. This Network Attached Storage (NAS) provides file storage for all our data and can be accessed both within the office and if required, remotely, when we need to work from home.

We are grateful to a supporter from one of the churches who spent time helping us source and install this solution along with the essential secure backups. Our previous server was needing to be replaced and the Virtual Private Network (VPN) hadn't been working for some while, so we couldn't efficiently work from home.

Bridge Builders continues to be really blessed by volunteers who give up their time to support us in so many ways and we are thankful to the supporter who made a donation to cover the cost of the NAS.

Our printer is usually working hard every day that we are in the office. We printed around 1200 booklets for The Christmas Journey, 1400 for The Easter Journey, 600 for The Harvest Journey and 500 for The Adventure Journey this year, as well as printing for other non-profit organizations. In total we printed over 50,000 pages which is why we need a good quality reliable printer, so we replaced our old one which was needing constant maintenance with this brilliant Toshiba leased from Sirius Digital Solutions who are local here in Stevenage, provide excellent support to us by not only being there to help if we have a problem but also by delivering consumables to us by hand as we are only in the office two days a week during term time to take deliveries – Thank you Sirius!



Toshiba Printer with saddle stitch finisher unit



DELL Inspiron laptops

Two new laptops were bought using the remaining grant from Benefact Trust. These replace eight & ten year old devices. During the summer months all the laptops were updated to Windows 11 and setup the same for ease of use and support.

ExploRE

ExploRE is the umbrella term we use for our work in schools. The three core projects making up ExploRE are:

- Assemblies and Lessons
- The Christmas and The Easter Journeys
- The REach Project

All of our work in schools is tied to the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education and is available to schools free of charge.

Assemblies



Assemblies may quietly run along in the background of much of the work that Bridge Builders is most known for, but they are a vital part of our mission. Through regular contact with both staff and children in many primary schools throughout Stevenage and the local area, we are able to forge strong connections that help us to facilitate our other works such as The Christmas Journey and The Easter Journey.

We offer regular half termly assemblies, each one being a different theme to fit with the themes and ideas that the children will already be exploring in their regular lessons, whilst also bringing the messages of the Bible to life.

It's always so exciting and encouraging to see the enthusiasm for our assemblies on the faces of the older children, as many begin to recognise us and look forward to what we're going to teach them – we've even had a few cheers in a recent assembly when they discovered it was a Bridge Builders assembly.

It was sad to say goodbye to Angela in April of this year as she had already built quite a rapport with the schools that she visited. We wish her well. During the final term of the year we were unable to continue the assemblies due to lack of staff but we are delighted that Gemma was able to start with us for the last two weeks of the summer term where she got off to a flying start by booking assemblies for the Autumn term and setting out the themes. Welcome to the team Gemma.

The REach Project



The REach project is an exciting opportunity to reach even more children throughout Stevenage and surrounding areas with the good news of the Gospel.

What is the REach Project?

The REach Project offers online 'Journeys' to schools, so that there is one Journey available for each primary school year group.

Each Journey is a 90-minute workshop based on a Christian theme with links to the Hertfordshire Agreed R.E. syllabus. Teachers are provided with video clips and the resources needed to complete craft or classroom activities linked to the topics in the video.

The Christmas and Easter Journeys (for years two and five/six) are already available to schools in an online format.

The Harvest Journey



... was piloted in Autumn 2023. Four primary schools were recruited to the pilot. 210 year one children (age 5/6) heard the story of Joseph and the famine, the feeding of the 5000 and about how Christians give thanks to God.

The Adventure Journey



... was filmed and edited during 2023-24. It was piloted by three schools in the summer of 2024. It is aimed at year six children (age 10/11), focusing on Pentecost and Paul with the core message of trusting in God in times of change. It links to the theme of transition to secondary school. Feedback was very encouraging, and we will launch in full in Summer 2025.

Further Journeys

... are planned for school years three and four on the themes of "Our World" and "Life of Jesus".

The Christmas Journey



The Christmas Journey is an interactive event for children in primary school year two. They travel back in time to meet the shepherds, wise men, Anna and Simeon, as well as Mary, Joseph and the baby 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.

Schools have the option of attending a hosting church or accessing The Christmas Journey online, and we provide all the craft and resources which are required.

*21 schools booked meaning 956 children experienced
The Christmas Journey*

We are so thankful for the volunteers and hosting churches, as well as local councillors who donated to fund the craft activities. We cover the cost of £8 per child who attends The Christmas Journey, so rely on donations to be able to offer it year after year.

One teacher commented : 'All the adults were fabulous with all the children – thank you so much for letting us partake in this fabulous morning;'

The Easter Journey



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

29 schools signed up to take part in the event, so 1,307 children participated in the Easter Journey. This is MORE than we have ever had before!

The children hear about the teachings and miracles of Jesus and the events of Holy Week, starting with Palm Sunday. They find out about Jesus's life, teachings and death, and hear about his resurrection appearances to the disciples. The children are encouraged to think and ask questions, as well as consider and explore: 'Why was Jesus a Saviour?' and 'Why did He die? They are each given a notebook as a reminder of the Journey to take back school.

The majority of churches used our online videos rather than having four areas with narrators and it was very well received again. We found that the children engaged better with the video clips, and enjoyed going back to the same tables, with the same volunteers. This led to deeper conversations, with the children asking better questions.

One teacher said, 'The activities kept the children engaged and the time for each was perfect for their attention span.'

A child was overheard saying, 'I don't want to leave. I'm having too much fun!!



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

Supporters



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.

Volunteers



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

In particular, the Christmas and Easter Journeys have a lot of craft which needs preparing and counting into 30s to go into schools and churches. We have a group of volunteers who come to our office on Tuesday mornings to help.

The REach project also needs volunteers, including people willing to appear in one off roles in the videos, to regular weekly volunteering preparing craft materials and other resources for The Journeys.

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



The Team

Staff Team

Mrs Stephanie Knell – Director

Mrs Janice Hawketts – Finance and IT Manager

Mrs Cathy Beach – ExploRE Manager (REach)

Mrs Amanda Bryant – Communications Officer and Fundraiser

Miss Angela Paterson – ExploRE Manager (left April 2024)

Mrs Gemma Campbell – ExploRE Manager (started July 2024)

Trustees

Mrs Lynne Lee-Diep (Acting Chair)

Mr Peter Gordon

Mrs Penny Paton

Mrs Helen Gale

Rev Margaret MacCarthy

Mr Andrew Brown (started September 2023)

Jon Woodrow (started March 2024)



www.bridgebuildertrust.org.uk



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