



Annual Report



Tuesday volunteers preparing crowns for Christmas Journey.

2024-2025

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Many Thanks

10Giving, Broadwater Fair Trading, Bunyan Baptist Church, Christchurch Baldock, Churches Together In Stevenage, Grace Community Church, Hertfordshire County Council, Herts Police Choir, Hockerill Education Foundation, Holy Trinity, Longmeadow Evangelical Church, Royal British Legion, St. Hugh & St. John, St Ippolyts Church, St Martin's Knebworth, St. Mary's Graveley, St Mary's Junior School Ware, St. Mary's Shephall, St. Nicholas, St. Peter's Church Tewin, St Peter's Church Broadwater, Shalom Ministries, Sirius Digital Solutions, Stevenage Borough Council, Stevenage Family History Society, Trinity Church Knebworth, United Reformed Church, Verulam House Fund Trust, Welwyn Garden City Band and individual donors for your support.

Staff News

In September 2024 we welcomed Lynne Lee-Diep to the team as ExploRE Manager overseeing The Christmas Journey and The Easter Journey. Lynne has previously been a Trustee for Bridge Builders and has been involved with The Christmas Journey at St Peters for many years.

Lynne joins the existing team in the office: Janice Hawketts, Catherine Beach, Amanda Bryant and Gemma Campbell.



In March we said goodbye to our Director Steph Knell. The team and Trustees presented Steph with a rose to thank her for all her work at Bridge Builders. She will be much missed by the team.

We wish Steph well for the future.

Recruitment for a new Director has commenced and we hope to have someone in place for autumn 2025.

Director's Report

It is with regret and sadness that I stepped down as Director of Bridge Builders this year. I have enjoyed working for Bridge Builders for the last eight and a half years, first as Administration Manager, then ExploRE Manager, and finally as Director. There have been many changes - staff turnover, moving offices, as well as working through the covid pandemic.

I am delighted that Bridge Builders has new members of staff who are carrying on the work of reaching primary school children in Stevenage with the good news about Jesus. We are currently going into 9 local primary schools doing assemblies or lessons, The Christmas Journey and The Easter Journey are still well attended with over 1000 children attending each annually. We also have online Journeys for year 1 and year 6 which have been appreciated.

Thank you to those of you who pray, give financial support or help with the Journeys. I would encourage you to continue to pray for Bridge Builders, and offer what support you can, as they provide children in Stevenage many opportunities to hear about Jesus.

Steph Knell



Trustees' Report

It has been another year of change for Bridge Builders Christian Trust as Steph Knell stepped down from the role of Director at the end of April after 8 years working for Bridge Builders. We give thanks to God for Steph's faithful service over these years and for the many ways in which Bridge Builders has evolved and developed under her wise leadership. Perhaps most notable were the ways in which the work of Bridge Builders had to change during the covid-19 pandemic, and how the decisions made during that time have led to more children being able to engage with Bridge Builders' resources for many years to come.

As we move into this new school year, we seek God's guidance as we hope to appoint a new Director to lead Bridge Builders through this new season, knowing this will bring fresh opportunities.

We are once again grateful for the work of the whole Bridge Builders team this year. Cathy and Janice have taken on new team leader roles, which has enabled the whole team to continue during this interim period without a Director.



We have been encouraged by the increasing number of schools who have welcomed assemblies and asked for support with RE lessons. REach continues to work towards having a project for all primary school age groups, with the new year 3 Journey 'Our World' currently in the editing phase having been filmed earlier this year. And then, of course, The Christmas Journey and The Easter Journey were both well attended in local churches and accessed from many other schools, with over 3000 children following these Journeys in total this year!

We continue to be thankful for the team of volunteers who make sure that all the resources for each of these projects are prepared. Without them, the work of Bridge Builders would just not be possible.

Thank you to all those who have supported Bridge Builders over the past year; for the generous donations of churches, individuals and grant funders, for the prayerful support of the work in the office, in churches and in local schools, and for office space which is a real blessing.

We look forward to seeing God at work through Bridge Builders in this new school year!

Andrew Brown

The Bridge Builders team would like to thank the Trustees for the many ways in which they have helped us this year; leading prayers at our staff meetings, dressing up for Christmas Journey, helping at the Easter Journey, delivering resources to schools and all the other errands you have run. We are very grateful for your guidance and support.

Finance

In the year to 31st August 2025 the Trust had income of £43,310 and expenditures of £37,540 leaving a surplus in the year of £5,770.

The income is derived mainly from personal giving including associated Gift Aid £22,456 & from local partnering churches, £10,742. Our REach Project was awarded a £3k grant from The Verulam House Fund Trust, £3k from the Hockerill Education Foundation and local councillors gave grants totalling £600 towards purchasing crafts for The Christmas Journey & The Easter Journey.

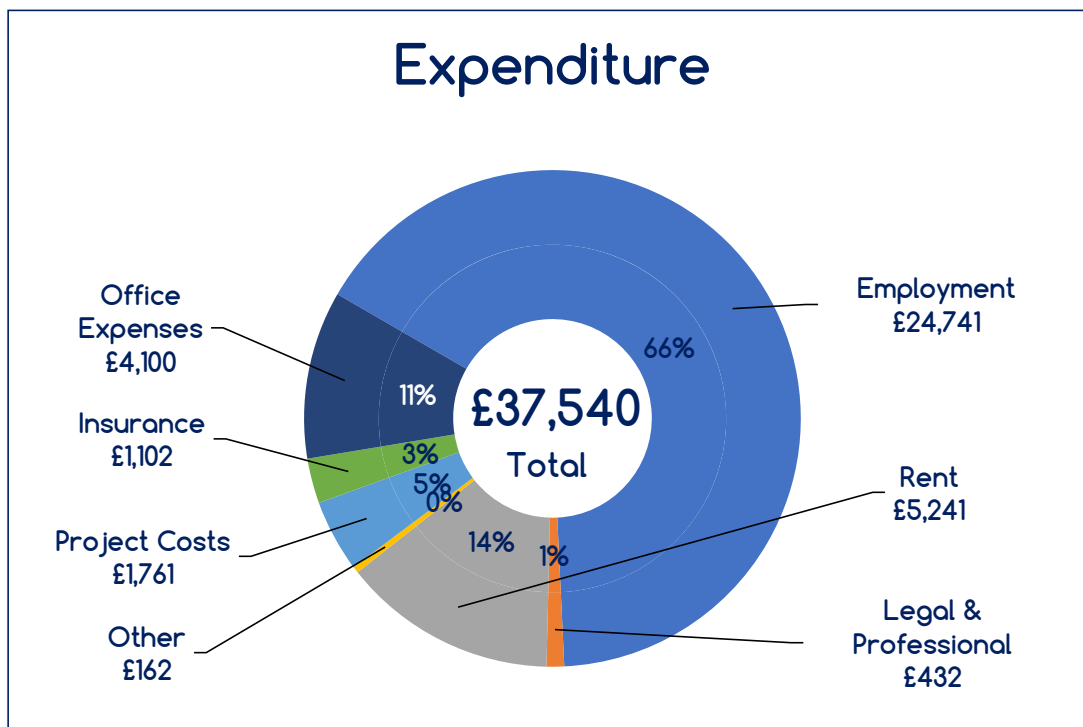
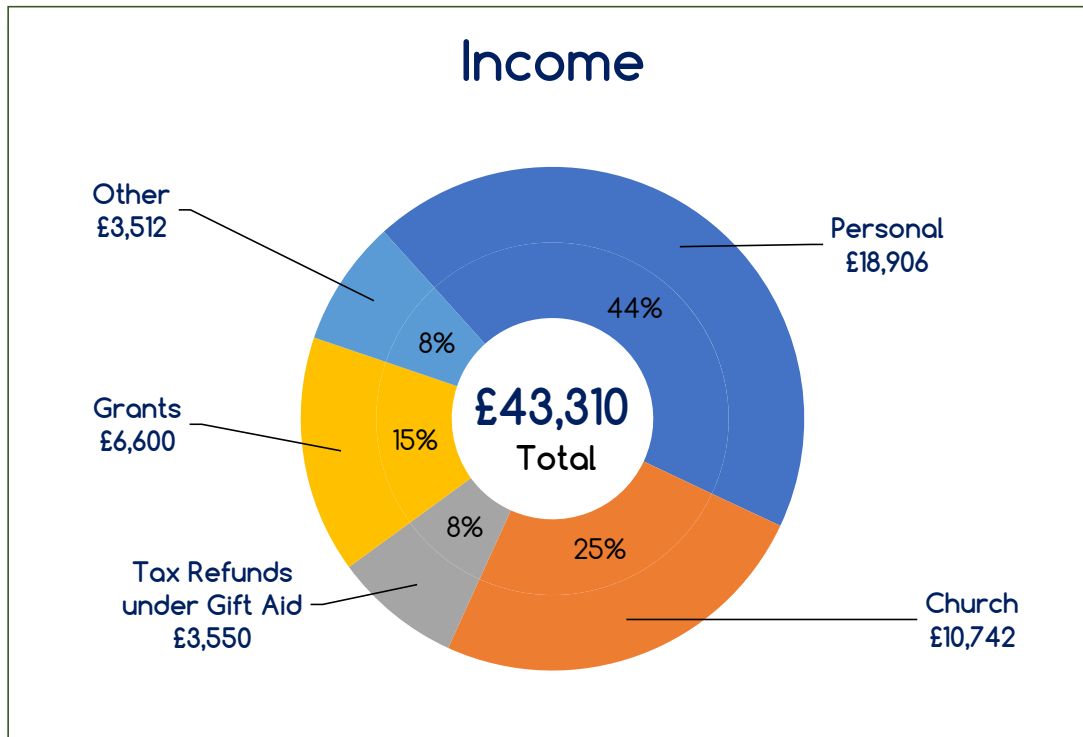
Local fundraising events contribute to the "Other Income" figure along with bank Interest, printing income (from printing we do for other non-profits), Christmas card sales, resource loan income & online fundraising income e.g. [Easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)

Expenditure in the year was mainly for payroll costs, £24,741; Office Expenses, £4,100; Rent of Resource Centre and Garage, £5,241; Insurance £1,102 & HR consultancy £72.

Financially, this was a good year with a surplus of £5,770. The income from our faithful supporters has remained consistent and so too that from our partner churches. Our payroll costs were lower than expected as it did not include the Director's salary, which explains the reduced expenditure.

Accounts

Income and Expenditure (£) for the Year Ended 31 August 2025



Fundraising

Bridge Builders Christian Trust's work in primary schools in Stevenage and the surrounding area is completely free of charge to schools, 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. On the following pages you will find a report on local fundraising events for Bridge Builders in the last year, as well as some successful grant applications.

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.

giftaid

ONE-OFF
GIFT ★


Stewardship
Active generosity

 **STANDING
ORDER**

Grant Funding

We are grateful to have received funding from a number of grant funding bodies, including the Verulam House Fund Trust and The Hockerill Education Foundation. We provide reports about how we spend grants, and how projects are progressing. We give detailed data including the number of schools/children who attend, and how the project was resourced, delivered and monitored. We also provide feedback from the school staff, children, and ministers or church leaders who attended.

We were awarded 50 copies of The Jesus Storybook Bible from 10Giving this year. These were used as gifts for classes participating in The Easter Journey.

Some councillors granted us awards from their Locality Budget for The Christmas and The Easter Journeys. We are always grateful for the support of our local councillors.

Fundraising Events

We are very grateful to the many churches and individuals who host and attend local fundraising events for Bridge Builders. Throughout the year, there were a variety of events; a quiz evening (including fish & Chips), a Brass Band concert, a Police Choir concert and a Fairtrade coffee morning. We also sold Christmas cards in local churches.



Overall, £1,935 was raised for Bridge Builders!

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

ExploRE

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

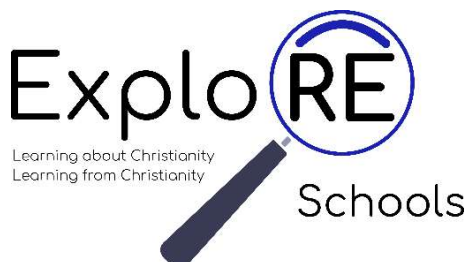
- Assemblies and Lessons
- The Christmas and Easter Journeys
- The REach Project

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

Lessons

We received requests from two schools this year to help support RE lessons, to speak to children about Christian Christmas traditions, what Christians believe happens when we die and a lively year 2 workshop on how Christians believe we should look after the world and other people. The children particularly enjoyed playing musical statues and posing as different animals each time the music stopped!

Looking forward into the new academic year, I am praying for more contacts in other schools so that more children can hear of God's love for them.



ExploRE



Assemblies



Bridge Builders offer schools one assembly per half term and help with RE lessons. I have enjoyed getting to know the various schools in Stevenage this year. The assemblies were met with enthusiasm from the children, one school giving a cheer that it was a Bridge Builders assembly rather than one lead by their Deputy Head. Hopefully, he wasn't too upset!

This year we have looked at subjects like worry, perseverance, friendship and our world. Each one has used a Bible story to show a Christian perspective on the subject. There is always a way the children can join in, like playing noughts and crosses, unpacking items to show what the story is about and most recently playing catch with eggs! (They were rubber, not that the children knew that to start with!)

"The children are really enjoying the assemblies and asked when their next Bridge Builders one is."

An Assistant Head Teacher

The Christmas Journey



22 schools participated.
1019 children went on
The Christmas Journey

The Christmas Journey is offered to Yr2 children, aged 6-7. They visit a church to explore the Christmas Story and to meet the shepherds in the fields, Anna and Simeon in the temple who are faithfully waiting for the messiah, the Wise Men who travel long distances, following a bright star. They even get to meet Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus!

Children are given a notebook in which they have an activity to complete after meeting each character in the Journey which helps them remember the story. They also decorate a crown to keep.

The visit concludes by meeting Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus and hearing their account of what took place.



"It was amazing for the children to personally experience the Christmas Story which helps bring our RE lessons to life!"
from a Yr2 teacher

The Christmas Journey is also available online for schools who are unable to visit a hosting church. There are video clips where they can hear the characters sharing their version of events. We provide all the craft and resources which are required.

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 and rely on donations to be able to offer it year after year.

The Easter Journey



The Easter Journey is an interactive event aimed at Year 5 children aged 9-10.

24 schools booked. 15 visited a church and in total 1323 children had the opportunity to hear about Easter.

Broken into sections, children watched a video clip together explaining the events that took place and posing some questions for them to consider.

After watching each clip, children returned to their tables, where there was further discussion with a church volunteer as they completed a short activity.



Starting with the miracles of Jesus, the children heard about His teaching, the events of Holy Week, from Palm Sunday and His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, to His death and resurrection. Children were asked questions for them to explore: "Why was Jesus a Saviour?" and "Why did He die?"

"It has tied together all our learning in the last few weeks and has allowed children to deepen their learning through the opportunity to chat to volunteers."

From a Yr5 teacher

From a child when asked which part of the journey they liked best...

"The bits where Jesus washed the disciple's feet because he saw himself as equal"

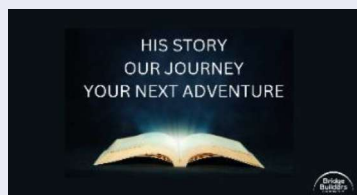
The REach Project



The REach Project offers online 'Journeys' to schools, with the aim that there will be 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 film clips and the resources needed to complete craft or classroom activities linked to the topics in the video.

The Christmas (Y2) and Easter Journeys (Y5) are already available to schools in an online format. 543 children followed The Harvest Journey in September 2024. They heard the story of Joseph and the famine, about the feeding of the 5000, and were given time to reflect on where food comes from and God's provision for us. A Journey about the Life of Jesus (Y4) is to follow in 2026.

The Adventure Journey



... was launched in summer 2025. Six schools signed up for the Journey and 292 children have completed it. The Journey is aimed at year six children (age 10/11), focussing 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.

The Our World Journey



... was filmed in May 2025. It is currently being edited and is likely to be piloted in Spring 2026. Children will learn about the story of creation, Noah, and then hear about Jesus and the wedding at Cana. Our thanks go to everyone who helped with the filming either in an on-screen role or behind the scenes with AV support.

Regarding The Harvest Journey, one teacher said, *"The children enjoyed being creative. The song really helped. Having a cartoon and the narrators separate really helped them"*

SEN and Journeys

There has been a large increase in the number of pupils with Special Educational Needs and this is reflected in our experience of children attending The Christmas and Easter Journeys. We have developed a number of adaptations to our Journeys to assist these children including:

- Adding subtitles to all of our videos
- Making large print versions of resources available
- Including information about how to assist children with additional needs at our training sessions for in-person Journeys
- Making additional sensory resources available at The Journeys
- Ensuring churches are aware of dietary issues that may occur at The Journeys including an awareness of allergies, diabetes and sensory needs.
- Including the opportunity for schools to inform us of additional needs at the booking stage.

The Christmas and Easter Journeys

We have developed adapted versions of The Christmas Journey and The Easter Journey which are available to schools for students with disabilities and additional needs. These feature simplified storytelling and more hands-on resources such as puppets, goblets and palm leaves. We are grateful to Lonsdale School and to St Hugh and St John's Church for their help in developing these Journeys.



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.

Our host churches recruit a huge number of volunteers each year to help run The Christmas and Easter Journeys. Some volunteers dress up as characters from the nativity, others help with activities or serve refreshments.

All of our Journeys include numerous activities which need preparing and sorting into class sets for schools and churches. We have a group of volunteers who come to our office on a Tuesday morning to help. We also need volunteers to deliver resources to schools ready for use.

The REach project relies on volunteers, including people willing to appear in one off roles in one of the videos, or to assist with filming and video editing.

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 (left March 2025)

Mrs Janice Hawketts—Finance and IT Manager

Mrs Cathy Beach – ExploRE Manager - REach

Mrs Amanda Bryant – Fundraiser

Mrs Lynne Lee-Diep – ExploRE Manager - Journeys

Mrs Gemma Campbell – ExploRE Manager - Assemblies

Trustees

Mr Peter Gordon

Mrs Penny Paton (Left Aug 2025)

Mrs Helen Gale

Rev Margaret MacCarthy

Mr Andy Brown

Mr Jon Woodrow

BRIDGE BUILDERS CHRISTIAN TRUST

www.bridgebuilderstrust.org.uk



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