

Annual Report



Meeting the challenge of a global pandemic

The disciples considered children to be a noisy nuisance, expecting them to go and play quietly in a corner. Jesus' attitude was totally different, he welcomed the children, he called them to himself, not just to play with them, but to welcome them into the kingdom of God. He saw them as a precious example to us all. (Luke 18v16)

Our goal at Bridge Builders is to work with local Christians and churches to fulfil Jesus' vision, for the children of Stevenage and wider Hertfordshire. Over many years, staff and volunteers have built up good and trusting relationships with many of the local primary schools so we are in the privileged position of being Christians explaining our faith to children, as part of the Religious Education curriculum.

During this year there have been some significant changes at Bridge Builders. At the end of May, Peter Gordon retired as Honorary Director and kindly agreed to become a Trustee, so we have not lost his invaluable financial expertise. Steph Knell has very ably stepped up to be acting Director and to lead Bridge Builders day to day. We have also said farewell to Alex Horlock and Revd. Don Dowling as Trustees and welcomed Penny Paton, Helen Gale and Judy Brown as new Trustees. I would like to thank Peter for his excellent leadership over the last five years and Alex and Don for the tremendous contribution they have made over many years, and to welcome Penny, Helen and Judy.

Covid 19 has severely restricted how we work together. Early on we took the decision to cancel the final two weeks of The Easter Journey 2020 so as to relieve the pressure on partner churches, volunteers and schools to participate in face-to-face activities.

Steph and her team have done a fantastic job in adapting to the CV19 restrictions producing online assemblies and a virtual version of the Christmas Journey that schools can safely use. We have taken advantage of the Government's furlough schemes, making up the staff pay to 100% from Bridge Builders resources, which we will continue so long as finances allow. Most of our costs are associated with paying the salaries of our staff, and as grant giving bodies tend not to fund salaries or operating costs of established organisations, we are very reliant on local Christians and churches supporting the work of Bridge Builders.

Our focus is to continue to work with local schools, even within the tight constraints of the school curriculum and CV19 restrictions. Using modern technology, we are still able to reach out and tell children about the love of God and the salvation of His son Jesus.

The Trustees would like to thank all of our supporters for their continued and generous support for the work of Bridge Builders through prayer, volunteering and financial gifts.

Anthony Taylor Chair of Trustees

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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Many Thanks

Allchurches Trust, Broadwater Fair Trading, Bunyan Baptist Church, Churches Together In Stevenage, Hertfordshire County Council, Holy Trinity, Great Ashby Community Church, Hockerill Educational Foundation, Longmeadow Evangelical Church, Ravenstone PCC, St. Andrews Church Hertford, St. Hugh & St. John, St Martin's Knebworth, St. Mary's Graveley, St. Mary's Shephall, St. Nicholas, St. Peter's, Sirius Digital Solutions, Stevenage Borough Council, United Reformed Church, Trinity Church Knebworth, and individual donors for your generous support.

An Interesting Year

As many people have found, the last year has been a strange one. At Bridge Builders, we started the academic year with assemblies and lessons running in the Autumn term. The Christmas Journey had 1085 children signed up from 21 schools, across Stevenage and further afield. Four churches hosted The Christmas Journey, and we are thankful for the opportunity to work with those churches, and for the volunteers who made The Christmas Journey possible.

The Easter Journey also started well, with 1120 children booked into six churches in Stevenage, Knebworth and Hertford. However, the Covid-19 pandemic was starting to have an impact, and after one week of The Easter Journey we made the hard decision to cancel the rest of the event. A week after we made that decision, the whole country was in lockdown. We are aware that it was extremely disappointing for those churches who couldn't be involved, and we are praying that we will be able to work with those churches again in the years to come.

The rest of the year was spent making plans for this academic year, and changing those plans as the pandemic developed! We are grateful for the thinking, and work, that Inga Voss (ExploRE Manager – Journeys) put in towards a Virtual Christmas Journey before she left us at the end of the summer term. That planning has stood us in very good stead as we have started the new academic year.

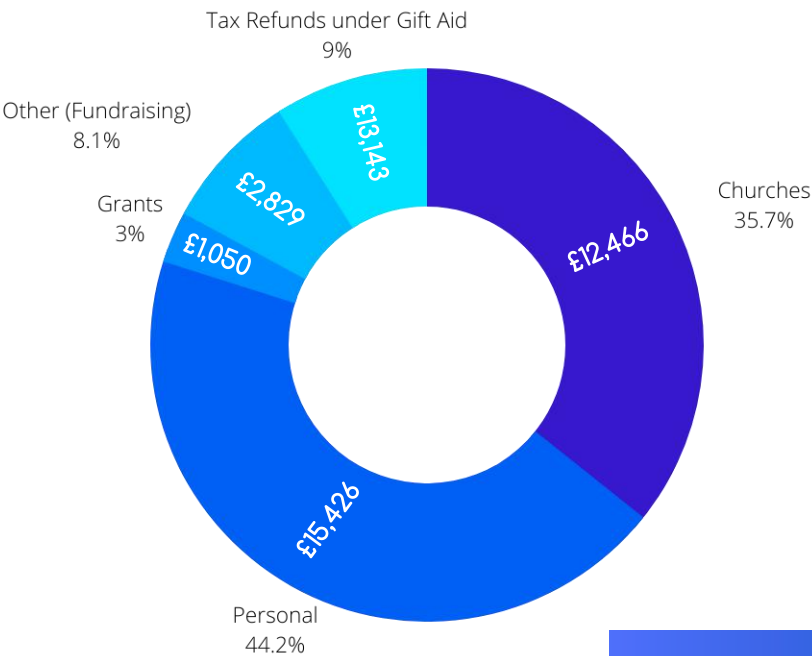
As this new year began we changed the way we worked. Assemblies have been recorded and put on our YouTube channel for schools to access – do have a look. We have also recorded a Virtual Christmas Journey, so children don't miss the opportunity to hear about Jesus this Christmas. Through all these changes, our desire remains the same; to introduce Jesus to the children of Stevenage and beyond. We long for each child to have an opportunity to think about who Jesus is, and for Him to have an impact on their lives. Life may have changed but our mission has not.

Steph Knell Acting Director

Income & Expenditure

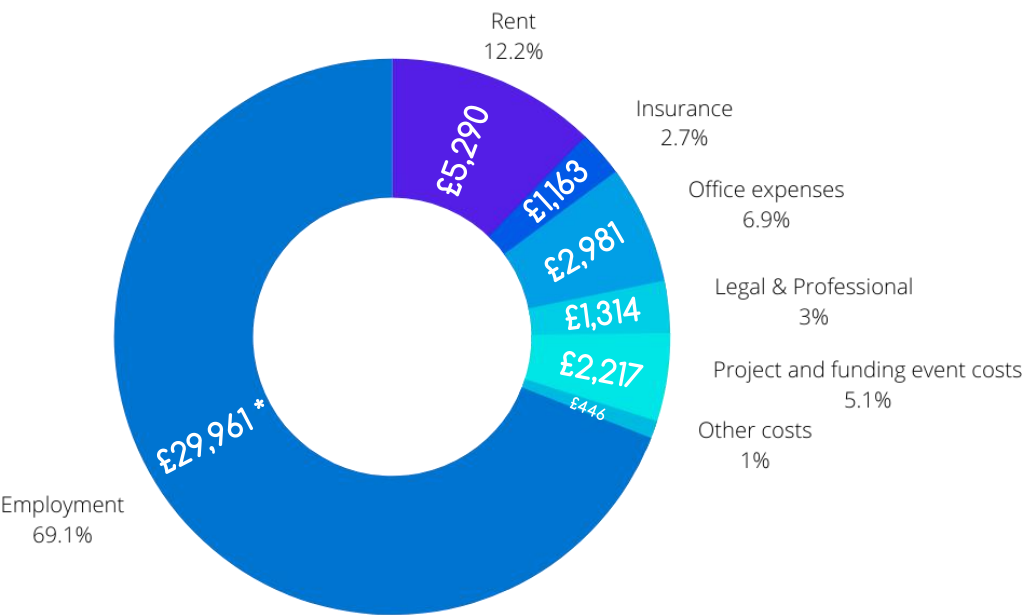
2019-2020

Income



Total income £34,915

Expenditure



* Offset of £4,658 HMRC JRS Grant

Total expenditure £38,714

The Christmas Journey

2019

An Encouragement

We have received many wonderful and encouraging comments from teachers, children and visitors who came along to The Christmas Journey.

"I learnt there were different people at the birth of Jesus. I learnt that Jesus was a king."



"It was lovely to see the children engaging with the Christmas story and they enjoyed the activities and having their completed passports to take home. Congratulations to all the volunteers from local churches who join to give them this experience and remind them of the true meaning of Christmas. "

"We loved our visit. Having the opportunity to see the story in a church environment was very beneficial. We loved the volunteers' enthusiasm."



The Team

Staff Team

Mr Peter Gordon—Honorary Director (retired June 2020)

Mrs Stephanie Knell—Acting Director from June 2020 / ExploRE Manager

Mrs Janice Hawketts—Finance and IT Manager

Miss Natalie James—Schools Worker

Mrs Karen Ashton—Administrator

Mrs Amanda Bryant—Communications officer and administrator

Trustees

Mr Anthony Taylor (Chair)

Mr Peter Gordon (June 2020)

Revd Don Dowling (resigned Jul 20)

Revd. Steven Cooper

Mrs Alexandra Horlock (resigned Dec 19)

Mrs Penny Paton

Mrs Helen Gale

Mrs Judy Brown



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