Cornerstone Church Colchester
Annual Report 2025

Report on the Charity's Activities

Preaching and Teaching

The new year in 2025 began with the second half of the Book of Philippians, where we continued to consider the joy, we have in Christ. This was mirrored in discipleship groups. Easter saw us in Matthew's Gospel before we began a series in Genesis chapters 1 to 3. This included both expository sermons and consideration of thematic topics like "science and creation", "Sabbath rest", "the image of God in humanity", "biblical masculinity and femininity", and the fall of Adam. We also covered a series of "Caring for leaders".

Due to the illness of the pastor, we are grateful for preachers who were able to cover for him, including Ed Mezetti, Gaius Phillingham, Hugo Heij, and Malcolm McGregor. Upon his return, John Parker preached through the first four chapters of Acts, which was also explored in discipleship groups using material by Albert Mohler Jr.

Our Advent series considered Christ as creator, incarnate, and returning to judge, culminating in Christmas all-age talks from Luke's Gospel. All sermons consider those visiting and new to the Christian faith, as well as seeking to build up mature Christians.

Kids' Work

During Sunday services, children leave the main service to attend age-appropriate groups, where they take part in a Bible-based talk followed by games and craft activities linked to the theme. Throughout 2025, the children engaged with a range of teaching series including What Is Church? Nehemiah, The Beatitudes, Back to School, Jesus Is Here, and We Need Jesus.

At the beginning of the year, the children's work was organised into two groups: Pebbles (ages 0–9) and Rocks (ages 10–16). The Sunday morning children's ministry was led by a dedicated team of nine volunteers; all of whom are DBS checked and have received safeguarding training.

Towards the end of the year, the children's work was restructured to better support different age groups. Three groups were introduced: Pebbles (ages 0–7), which typically had around four children attending; Rocks (ages 7–11), also with an average attendance of around four children; and Boulders, for high-school-aged young people. The Boulders group continued to grow, and by the end of the year had seven young people attending regularly.

Students

The church continues to welcome students from the University of Essex to its Sunday morning services. We currently have 4-6 students on a regular basis, whilst 27 students have joined us for at least one service at some point during the last year. During term time, a student lunch is usually provided, offering an opportunity for further discussion of the sermon alongside a general question and-answer

session. Over the summer, more than half of the students who attended regularly completed their degrees and moved away from Colchester. It has been encouraging to receive updates from them as they settle into new churches or take on leadership roles within Christian Unions at their new universities. This serves as a reminder that this ministry contributes to the wider, global Church by equipping and encouraging Christian students during their time at the University of Essex for the next stage of their lives.

Recently, a Saturday afternoon question-and-answer session was held at The Rovers Tye, to which students invited friends who are curious about Christianity.

A small number of students meet one-to-one with Church members to study the Bible. Students also contribute to the life of the wider Church community, and one student has recently become a Church member.

In addition, the church continues to support Friends International, a charity that seeks to build friendship and explore faith with international students. We continue to host termly Friends International games evenings in a home and Bekki Bibko and Boris Bikbo has attended many of the regular meetings on campus this year.

Music

Music at Sunday services is usually led by a small group of Church members, with the aim of leading the Church family in sung worship to praise God, encourage one another, and communicate the truths of the Christian faith. A range of appropriate music is used, typically chosen to reflect the themes of each service. We have been particularly grateful for new musicians stepping forward to serve this year. Recorded music is often used for all or part of the musical provision, either to give musicians a break or to enable musicians to serve in other areas of church life. This also allows for a wider variety of musical styles and enables the use of background music before and after services. Music is occasionally included at other Church events, such as *Carols with a Pint*.

The Church holds the appropriate CCLI licences to meet its needs, and all song usage is reported in accordance with CCLI requirements.

Church Events and Socials

Church events are planned and overseen by the Events Planning Sub-Committee which is made up of a small number of Church members and is chaired by a member of the Church Council. In 2025, this group has successfully planned and run 5 events with evangelistic talks, as well as 9 more informal social events for men, women and the whole Church family. Events have been well-attended and have provided a bridge between the Church and the wider community.

Evangelistic Focus

There were several times of evangelistic focus in 2025, enabling a specific focus on the promotion of the Christian faith through events, talks and personal conversations. In February, a number of visitors joined the church family for a Baptism Service, where personal testimony provided a great chance to see how Jesus can change an individual's life. Evangelistic events this year included Valentine's Biscuit Decorating in February, an Easter Family Fun Afternoon in April, a Quiz Night in October, and both Carols with a Pint and a Gingerbread House event in December. Also, a Carols & Crafts service at Christmas was attended by church family and a few guests. We welcome anyone to join us at our Sunday services. In 2025, we have welcomed over 80 visitors known to the church family and 13 visitors previously unknown to us, from both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. For those finding out more about the Christian faith, Christianity Explored Courses were run as groups or through one-to-one sessions.

An exciting new evangelistic focus was started this year, with Community Visiting giving the church family a chance to knock on doors of local residents to invite them to church services/events and engage in conversations about Christianity. This new initiative was preceded by a Prayer Walk around the local area in September, followed by training in door-to-door evangelism from James Tredgett in October. The first Community Visiting occurred in November. This seemed to be well-received by local residents on the whole, with some new contacts with the community being established. Leaflets about the church were delivered through about 200 doors, and more than 50 doors were knocked on. A good number of positive initial contacts were made, and some gospels/tracts were given out to those who were interested. More Community Visiting is being planned for 2026.

Roots & Shoots

Roots and Shoots is an outdoor after-school club for pre-school and primary-aged children and their parents or carers. In 2025, sessions ran on Monday afternoons from April to July, and again from September to October. Attendance during these sessions typically ranged between 8 and 12 children.

During each session, children were introduced to nature through a range of outdoor activities, followed by a snack and a short Bible-based talk, providing an opportunity for both learning and relationship-building with children and their families.

Food Bank

In keeping with the Church's objectives of caring for our members and the wider community, particularly those experiencing financial hardship in the current economic climate, the Church family continues to support Colchester Foodbank through regular donations.
At weekly services, members generously contribute items requested by the Foodbank. A volunteer oversees the weekly collection. The consistent generosity makes a significant difference to individuals and families facing severe need.

The Foodbank volunteers regularly express their gratitude and encouragement for the support received. The Church family, in turn, can be encouraged by the words of Scripture: "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

Pastoral Support

Pastoral support is overseen by the Senior Pastor, an Elder, the Women's Pastoral Lead and an Assistant Women's Pastoral Lead. During this year they have begun meeting regularly as a Pastoral Care Team; this has provided a co-ordinated view of Pastoral Care across the church.

Men's and Women's Discipleship Groups began 'Running the Race' in 2025 following the preaching series in Philippians. Studies covered aspects of Joy within the Christian life including 'Joy Filled Prayer' and 'Joy in Hardships'. Throughout the year there were also studies based on the beginning of Genesis and more recently the book of Acts.

The women's group has had around 5-8 attendees at each session and has been blessed by 5 ladies leading studies throughout the year. In the men's group they had around 3-6 attendances each session.

The Discipleship Groups have been a place of encouragement sharing and support with the challenges of life – marriage, work, friendship and family – and how we put the teaching of Jesus Christ into practice in our lives.

Visitation of those in need in the Church family took place, including the support of those experiencing health and/or social challenges. It was a joy to see much informal pastoral care as the 'one anothering' of the bible was lived out within the church family.

The membership course was run 3 times with 5 new members joining the Church. Monthly celebrations of the Lords Supper, following the liturgy of the Prayer Book, were held in local homes and more recently at the school.

In the summer, a "Trough Group" was trialled for 5 upper primary and secondary aged boys, at which food, Bible study and discussion was offered, the aim being discipleship and mentoring. This was appreciated by the attendees and their parents, and so regular meeting began in the autumn term.

Pastoral support was also offered to students attending the regular student lunches, in both relational counsel and support with health challenges.

Care for leaders within the Church included enabling times of rest and stepping back from the demands of Church leadership according to the principle of "people before programmes". This enabled refreshment and a restoration to these roles.

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator provided oversight of safeguarding throughout 2025. In the autumn term, the church transitioned from ThirtyOne:Eight to Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS), which now provides safeguarding advice, DBS services, and training as appropriate. An additional Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator was appointed during the year to support safeguarding administration and ensure processes were managed effectively.

Those holding voluntary roles within areas of the church's ministry and activities that require a level of trust were recruited in line with the Safer Recruitment Policy, including appropriate checks and references. During 2025, there were two new recruitments. Annual reviews were carried out for six volunteers in existing roles, with a small number of reviews completed in the first quarter of the year following carry-over from the previous year.

Safeguarding remains a standing item on the agendas of both Church Council and Trustees. The church is committed to relational, plural, and accountable leadership, which supports safeguarding against spiritual abuse and helps protect against the inappropriate use of power. The church continues to uphold high standards of safeguarding practice, including ensuring that volunteers receive training appropriate to the roles in which they serve.

During 2025, three safeguarding disclosures were managed to satisfactory conclusions. Advice was sought from CSS and other appropriate organisations on these occasions. Relevant risk assessments were shared with Church Council, and appropriate pastoral care was provided.

Leadership and Governance

Cornerstone Church Colchester was established as a charity (CIO) in February 2023. The Church Report for 2024 was submitted to the Charities Commission, in accordance with governance requirements.
The Trustees of the charity have met four times in 2025, where questions were asked to ensure that the charity has been fulfilling its objects and legal obligations, and that decisions of the Church Council reflected the will of the Trustees. At the Annual Meeting of Church Members on 27 April, a five-year vision (the 5 Ms vision) adopted by the Trustees was supported by the Church membership.

Day-to-day leadership of the Church is overseen by the Church Council, which includes Elders and Deacons, along with other Church members. The Elders and Deacons met 11 times to lead the Church spiritually and in plurality. The Church Council met 12 times and effected the practical and pastoral organisation of the Church.

The Church Rules define many areas of how leadership and governance within the Church function, in conjunction with the Constitution. The Church has policies approved by both the Church Council and Trustees within the following areas: Employment, Finance, Data Protection, Health and Safety, Catering with Care, Fire Safety, Safeguarding, Safeguarding Against Spiritual Abuse, and Safer Recruitment.

The Church also has Standard Operating Procedures in the following areas: Children and Young People Work on a Sunday morning, compiling services using Presenter, and a Pastoral Confidentiality Flowchart. Additionally, Terms of Reference are set for Elders and Deacons, the Events Planning Sub Committee, the Finance Sub-Committee, and the Buildings Sub-Committee.

The Church Council has a yearly plan to ensure that policies and procedures are reviewed periodically. However, most of the work to review and update these policies has been carried over to 2026. Additionally, an important part of the Church's governance within Health and Safety is the risk assessment of all Church activities and events.

Buildings

Following the growth of our church beyond the capacity of our venue at Rovers Tye Pub, we moved our weekly services to a local school Queen Boudica Primary School. In response to this growth and the need for a clear accommodation strategy, a Buildings Committee was formed in May 2025 to support the church with its building and accommodation plans.
The committee is tasked with reviewing building and accommodation-related needs and reporting its recommendations to the Church Council. It is responsible for practically implementing the buildings strategy as set out by the Trustees and/or Church Council, working in partnership with those leadership groups as required (for example, when financial or legal matters need to be discussed or actioned).
As an immediate practical step, the committee has planned for the installation of a storage shed on the school premises where the church meets weekly. This will help resolve the ongoing task of transporting church equipment from the pastor's garage each week.
In addition, the committee is now exploring possible buildings for long-term church use. This includes identifying suitable premises, considering legal and planning requirements, and reviewing potential funding options.

Finances

The finances of the Church are overseen by the Treasurer and Treasurer's Assistant, with support from the Finance Sub-Committee. Church finances are managed through Stewardship and held in a Church bank account.
The Church's financial position remained strong during 2025. Our financial income allowed us to recruit an administrator role on a part time bases, as the second employee of the Church.

The charity received an income figure of £69,104. The charity's expenditure was £56,318.

Cornerstone Colchester benefits from the fact that most funding comes from Church members and external supporters, primarily through regular monthly giving via our Stewardship Giving account.

There is no dependency on grants or other types of funding from external sources.

Those contributing by monthly standing order can choose the level of their support with no minimum amount set.

Supporters can also give via a physical donation box or via card machine. The donation box is dual checked regularly and signed for, before being paid into our bank account.

Our General Fund receives all income and uses it to cover the running costs of the charity. The charity has no investments, fixed assets, or loans. It makes no grants and spends nothing on fundraising.

We have two designated funds, one for ministry and one for buildings. We have £30,000 in an interest earning account with Kingdom Bank. £20,000 of this is set as our reserve fund. £10,000 is from our general funds but it was decided and agreed by the Church Council to put this amount into the interest earning account. We also generated £364.55 of interest from this £30,000. Giving a total of £30,364.55 within Kingdom Bank.

We give 10% of our total income from 2025 away to other selected local, national and global charities.

We have had an independent examination of the accounts completed, and the report can be found on the following page.

Report to the Trustees of Cornerstone Church on the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2025

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the year ended 31st December 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

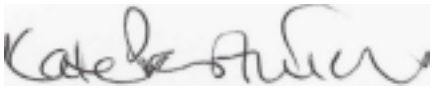
I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Name: Kate Prestwich

Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

Date : 9/3/26

Cornerstone Church

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st December 2025

	£	£	2024 £
Income:			
- Unrestricted funds		69,104	46,433
Expenditure:			
- Bibles and Scripture Literature	1,296		924
- Catering	1,129		775
- Clothing costs	-		347
- Conferences	295		465
- Counselling support	-		300
- Equipment and materials	2,602		2,281
- Gifts and cards	502		300
- Grants/Away giving	5,255		2,460
- Guest speakers	-		445
- Independent examination of accounts	400		250
- Insurance	365		368
- Employed staff salaries	31,747		8,374
- Licences and subscriptions	2,138		1,781
- Marketing	262		101
- Ministerial expenses - travel	530		1,186
- Miscellaneous	357		177
Carried forward	46,878		20,534

			2024
	£	£	£
Brought forward	46,878		20,534
- Mission, evangelism and outreach	552		333
- Overseas mission partners	650		760
- Pastoral support	150		-
- Payroll and pension set up fees	633		335
- Printing and stationery	170		84
- Staff and volunteer training	515		1,085
- Student work	972		694
- Telephone	499		343
- Utilities	52		-
- Utilities donation for the Parkers	-		100
- Venue costs	4,750		4,561
- Website costs	450		214
- Youth and children's work	47		186
		56,318	29,229
Excess of income over expenditure		12,786	17,204

Cornerstone Church

Balance Sheet
At 31st December 2025

		2024
		£
Current assets		
- Current account	8,544	7,522
- Deposit account	31,764	20,000
	40,308	27,522
Unrestricted general funds		
- Balance brought forward	27,522	10,318
- Excess of income over expenditure	12,786	17,204
- Balance carried forward	40,308	27,522