

The Bridge Christian Fellowship
Charity Registration Number: NIC101044

9 Derry Rd,
Strabane
Co Tyrone
BT82 9DT

Annual Trustees Report
Financial Year: 1/04/23 – 31/03/24

The purpose of the Bridge Christian Fellowship is to advance the principles of Christianity for the benefit of the public in accordance with The Bridge Christian Fellowship statement of faith.

The direct benefits which have flowed from this purpose during the period indicated above include the provision of a place of worship in Strabane where The Bridge Christian Fellowship have met each Sunday morning. These meetings have served to raise awareness and understanding of beliefs based on the Bible and were open to anyone to attend. The Sunday meetings have been advertised on the Facebook page which is open to anyone to access.

Special events such as the Community Christmas Service on Sunday 17th December 2023 were also advertised on Facebook and open to all from the community. The benefits of these meetings also included an identifiable positive, beneficial, moral and ethical framework which we seek to promote and live by as set out in the Bible.

During this period the organisation has supported missionary and outreach work both locally and internationally. Support of local missions' work includes financial support of an 'E3 Schools Project' in the North-West run by Scripture Union. In support of this a Table Quiz was organised on Friday 13th October. The benefits of this event included financial support of the local E3 Schools worker alongside the social benefit of providing social interaction for the local community and those attending (the event was open to all and advertised on Facebook).

Support of international missionary work involved ongoing financial support of Christian work in Asia given to the charity 'Asia Link', along with three members of The Bridge Christian fellowship visiting Asia with 'Asia Link' in October 2023 to support this work. Further support of international missions includes ongoing financial support to missionaries in Italy. The benefits of this include the funding of projects which address those most impacted by poverty and persecution in Asia and the advancement of Christian teaching in Italy. The benefits of the support include an identifiable positive, beneficial moral and ethical dimension in the areas supported.

Further to this the church sponsors three children through 'Compassion UK'. The benefits of this have been proven through independent research which shows that compassion-

sponsored children are more likely to be employed as a result, and to become leaders in their communities and churches.

Children of primary school age have benefited from 'Bridge Kids' Sunday School meeting held weekly and open to all children. In addition, a 'Mission Possible' Holiday Bible club was organised during the school holidays and advertised on Facebook. The Holiday Bible Club provided primary school aged children with the opportunity to come together, have fun, play games, sing songs and learn about the Bible from 3rd-6th August 2023. This event culminated in a special family service which included a BBQ lunch. The benefits of these activities are demonstrated through feedback from members of the Bridge and their families, comments on Facebook and letters of thanks expressed by those who have benefited. These events provide an identifiable positive, beneficial moral and ethical dimension for the children who attend alongside the promotion of spiritual welfare and social interaction.

Opportunities to address the social and spiritual needs of women within the Strabane community included the organisation of a number of women's events. 'Kingdom Connections' was held on Friday 29th September 2023 and promoted social interaction as women from the community gathered to develop deeper friendships. A women's conference, 'Women of Worth' was held on 4th October 2023. Following this 'Craft & Carols' was held on Friday 8th December and an 'Easter Brunch' was held on Saturday 23rd March. These were advertised on Facebook and open to anyone. The benefits of these events included social interaction and the promotion of spiritual welfare.

Women from within Strabane community also benefited from the organisation of a 'Swap Shop' evening on Friday 19th May 2023 which was advertised on the Facebook page and open for anyone to attend. The benefits of this event included women enjoying social interaction and the opportunity to get some 'nearly new' clothes contributing to the relief of poverty.

To address the social needs of the community a Women's surfing event was organised on 2nd April 2023 and to meet the needs of the men in the community a Men's Surfing Event was held at Benone beach on 6th May 2023. During these events the women and men had the opportunity to experience a surf lesson followed by food. The benefits of these events included social interaction and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle as it enabled women and men of different ages and backgrounds within the community to get together and try something new, having fun together.

The spiritual needs of the men in the community were addressed through the 'Legacy' Men's event held on Friday 24th November 2023. This was an event aimed at fathers and father-figures and provided the direct benefit of social interaction and the promotion of identifiable positive, beneficial moral and ethical dimensions in regard to parenting.

In December 2023 the organisation supported the work of 'Samaritan's Purse' charity by sending 26 shoeboxes filled with gifts to contribute towards the 'Operation Christmas Child' shoebox appeal and paying for 25 children to experience an additional education programme. This benefited children in regions of Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia by

providing children with a Christmas gift and information about the Christian faith which is in line with our purposes as a charity.

Outreach has been both on a spiritual and a practical level. In accordance with living as the Bible teaches, we recognise the social needs of our community and seek to provide opportunities to support those in need. The benefits of meeting social needs within the community have included assistance with transport to hospital appointments, hospital visitation, painting and garden maintenance on houses of vulnerable people within the community, ongoing befriending and support to those in need within the community.

In recognition of the hardship our community are facing, the organisation ran 'The Bridge Community Hub' during this period. This provided facilities to run a 'drop-in' centre on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10am-2pm from April – June 2023 and September – March 2024 and on Tuesdays and Fridays 10am-2pm in July and August 2023. Further to this, The Bridge Community hub opened on Wednesdays from 7-9pm beginning on 20th March 2024. This provided free tea/coffee and buns to anyone who wished to avail themselves of it. The benefits of this were in the provision of community who may have been in need by reason of age and financial hardship, as well as advancement of community development and social interaction for those who may have been isolated. This service was accessed by a broad range of people from within the community.

A range of events to support parents were also facilitated at The Bridge Community Hub. These included 'Who Let the Dad's out?' events held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month. These events supported fathers with young children and included a free breakfast and activities for 0-6 year olds. On Wednesdays from 10-12pm a Mums and Toddlers group ran each week. A 'Kids Clothes Swap Shop' held on Saturday 26th August offered an opportunity for parents to avail of free 'nearly new' clothing for pre-school and primary-school aged children providing the recognised benefit of poverty relief. A teenage 'Youth Drop-in' ran every other Saturday evening from 7-9pm offering free snacks and games to the youth of the community. The benefits of these events included support to those most in need by reason of youth, and the provision of social interaction for both the young and their carers.

On Sunday 17th March 2024 a special 'St Patrick's Day' event was held at The Bridge Community Hub providing free food, St Patrick's literature and face-painting for children with the benefit of promoting the advancement of culture.

Further to this the community has benefited through making our building available, free of charge, for the use of counselling conducted by qualified counsellors in Strabane. The benefit of this is meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in society and the advancement of mental health and well-being.

The organisation also ran 'Elevate' youth club on the last Friday evening of each month. The club was open to young people with Special Educational Needs as meetings with Knockavoe Special School staff identified that these young people's social needs were not being fulfilled. This also included special family events such as a BBQ and Games evening for families of the young people on Saturday 1st July. The benefits of this included social

interaction for those who attended, and who may otherwise be isolated, as well as raising awareness and understanding of beliefs based on the Bible.

A Church Weekend was held at Castlewellan, Co. Down on 1st-3rd Sept 2023. This was advertised on Facebook and available to anyone who wished to attend. Benefits of this included developing the attendee's social, moral and ethical framework which we seek to promote and live by as set out in the Bible. In addition, this provided social interaction for those connected to the church.

In addition to advertising activities and events on Facebook many are also signposted on the website for additional information.

It is important to note that at all times the trustees have had regard to the NI Charity Commissions Public benefit requirement statutory guidance.

In regard to the financial position of the Bridge Christian Fellowship, the charity began the financial year with a balance carried over of £47,049. During the period (01/04/2023-31/03/24) the organisation moneys totalling £118,153 and has had expenditure totally £92,239 resulting in a balance of £72,963 at the close of the financial year. At no time has the organisation been in deficit during this period. Further details of the Bridge Christian Fellowship finances are available in the end-of-year receipts and payments report.

This report has been prepared by the trustees of the charity: Sarah Margaret Johnston, Annie Mary Smyth and Stephen Aiken.

The Trustees of the Bridge Christian Fellowship were appointed on 03/03/13. Governing documents include the Trust Deed and Bridge Christian Fellowship Constitution.