



# EFCC

exalting Christ in growing  
healthy churches

## Annual Review 2023



# “Gospel Growth in Smaller Churches”



Tom Brand  
Ministry Director

## Introduction

Welcome to the EFCC annual review! Our theme this year, and at our AGM is ‘Gospel Growth in Smaller Churches.’ In this introduction I’ll cover several areas—Gospel growth, ministers and elders in our churches, and giving.

The Lord has promised to build his church, we need to be faithful, and expect and plan for fruit. When we follow the Lord’s blueprints for the church set out in Scripture we can expect the Lord to bless with growth, not because he owes us anything but because he loves to bless and build his church. The New Testament makes it clear that Gospel growth is the norm—along with persecution, opposition—and quarrelling! There are certainly dry times and times of decline, but this is not what we should expect over the life-

time of a local church. Gospel growth in smaller churches is wonderfully encouraging, often because we can so clearly see the Lord at work giving the increase.

At the Ministers’ Prayer Conference in November 2022, it was such an encouragement to see so many younger men that have recently come into ministry in the EFCC. It is a tremendous blessing to gain wisdom from retired ministers at our conferences and in our churches, but there is something healthy and strong and encouraging about younger men coming into ministry—isn’t this just what we’ve been praying for? That the Lord would send workers into his harvest field? The Lord is graciously and wonderfully answering our prayers. The Lord is good, he is enabling us in our vision of ‘exalting Christ in growing healthy churches.’

Over the last several years we have emphasised the vital importance of churches calling pastors. In Ephesians 4 Paul the



Apostle explains that when Christ ascended to heaven after his death and triumphant resurrection, he gave gifts to his church. These are word ministry gifts, particularly pastors and teachers—if your church has a pastor, praise God for him, he is a gift to your church from the risen Christ! But churches need more than a pastor to be healthy and strong and to grow. The New Testament model is a plural eldership which includes the pastor. We've been running our Biblical Eldership training programme for men in our churches that the Lord is leading into eldership.

All the work of the EFCC needs funding. It's a joy to help churches in calling pastors and to see churches revitalised over this last year. Some that have been going for a couple of years now are continuing to see growth, others are at the beginning of the revitalisation journey. This is central to what the EFCC is all about. Please pray about how your church can give to support the EFCC so we can continue to help churches in 'exalting Christ in growing healthy churches.' It has also been great to see some churches in particular financial need receive gifts from other EFCC churches, this has been a huge encouragement to the pastors. These ways of giving in the EFCC can be part of the local church's mission budget.

Images top to bottom: Outreach at Birstall, Induction of Andrew Hill at Hayes, Induction of Paul Dutton at Therfield, Ministers' Prayer Conference, Women's Conference.

Cover: Induction of Chungman Shon at Ashford Cong. Church





## Gwynne Evans

Chair: EFCC Trust Board

# Trust Board

The Apostle Paul writing to the church at Philippi in Philippians 1:12 said ‘...what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.’ This desire to ‘advance the gospel’ is written as one of the main objects of the EFCC constitution adopted in 1971, ‘To advance the Evangelical Christianity through Independent Churches ‘

The Greek word Paul used, translated as ‘advance’ (NIV) or ‘furtherance’ (NKJV), was a military word used to describe cutting a way forward or advancing. We all have to confess we have not seen the advance of Christianity as we would desire over the last 52 years, but we thank the Lord for the blessings and encouragements we have received of men and women converted, and churches established which were not in existence in 1971. If there is one desire we should all have in these spiritually dark days it is to see the Lord Jesus glorified as God’s kingdom is advanced.

The Trust Board’s object and responsibility is stated in the company memorandum as ‘to promote, aid and further the objects and work of the Charity known as EFCC (the Fellowship)’.

This is done by acting as the legal and financial arm of the Committee and the churches which are in the Fellowship. Over the past thirty years, Trust funds

have been administered, which have made it possible for the TB to employ for the fellowship, a Ministry Director (previously General Secretary), two part-time Ministry coordinators (previously several Regional Secretaries) and a Women’s Ministry Coordinator. This year we will be seeking to employ a third Ministry Coordinator covering the South. Then there is the vital work done by our current Operations Manager (previously Office Manager) assisted by an Administrator.

Pastors have been helped with welfare grants and contributions to their pensions. Congregational Churches that otherwise wouldn’t have been able to afford to pay a stipend have been helped to step out in faith to call pastors with financial support through EFCC grants. Churches in key strategic locations which have very small memberships, are being replanted by financial support to call a minister. Men have received grants to train for the ministry, retired Ministers and widows have been supported, churches have been assisted in repairs and maintenance of their buildings and much more.

All this costs money and while we thank the Lord for gifts that churches and individuals make, these only make up a very small percentage of our costs. As I look back over twenty-plus years as a trustee,

the level of giving is about the same and if we factor in inflation then it has significantly decreased. Over the past two years investment returns have been much lower and if we are to continue to serve the churches at the same level in the years ahead, as we have in the past, then we need churches to reconsider their responsibility to support financially the work of EFCC, as well as their continual prayers for the advance of the gospel this vital work.

Over the past year work has continued in assisting churches to move to a CLG (Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee) and further work has been undertaken in seeking to have Safeguarding Policies for the whole organisation.

We deeply lament the loss of each gospel light a closed church represents, but an important part of the Board's trusteeship work is to assist those churches to do so in an orderly way, whilst seeking to use legacy funds and assets to further the gospel and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Sometimes that requires pragmatism and when Whitby Congregational Church closed in 2019 a God-given opportunity arose for a church without a building to use the church. Whitby Christian Fellowship have been using the building now for around 2 years and have seen their congregation grow from 69 to 85, they have established a not-for-profit café and a warm space over the winter months. It is wonderful to see the gospel light glowing brightly in the 'later house'.

A sad fact (for us, but not for them) is that during the last eighteen months, the Lord has called home a number of His faithful servants who have served our churches and the Fellowship for so many

years and we greatly miss them. It is appropriate to record our thanks to the Lord for each of his servants: Beverley Grove, John Semper, Lila Brown, Jan Harrow, Pam Harrison, Peter Beale, Peter Lane, Gordon Hold, Brenda Dupont and Malcolm Coles. We praise the Lord for their faithful and devoted service of so many years. Please continue to pray that the Lord will comfort their spouses and family members who continue to grieve their loss and that as we see increasing gaps in our fellowship of faithful workers; please pray for the Lord to raise up a new generation of faithful servants and pastors. of the Lord.

We need new trustees who have skill sets in finance, accountancy, management, and law, and those with a willingness to give of other talents and time. Please contact me if you think you might be able to use your particular gifts for the Lord as a trustee. Bill Calder who has served the Lord as a trustee retired in February and I want to express my sincere thanks to Bill for all his faithful service over these past 14 years both as a committee member and trustee. I also want to express my thanks to the other trustees Rev Jackie Brown, Rev Digby James, Rev James Devenish, Mr Phillip Williams and Mr Gilbert Stephenson and all those who have served in the past, for their wise council and the time and energy they have given. And last, but not least for the support of Paul Walker and David Smith, who do so much in enabling the TB and the Fellowship to function as a cohesive body and making our work possible.

May the Lord be pleased to grant in the year ahead, that we might see real advance in the gospel in the churches of the fellowship.



James Devenish  
EFCC Committee Chairman

## Committee

I have been privileged to chair the EFCC Committee this past year and have also served on the Trust Board. It has been challenging at times, a lot of work but above all a real joy to serve the Lord and His people in this way.

I would love to advertise the work of the Committee—we meet twice a year in person and have one meeting on Zoom.

More recently we have combined a joint session with the Trust Board as we seek to join up our spiritual and practical decision-making. The role of the Committee is to care for the fellowship, and spiritually care for the needs of the churches. We pray a lot for the work, we pray for individual churches and pastors, and we practically address ministry concerns and challenges. This coming year we will work on looking at the structure of the EFCC with the ultimate aim of improving how we serve our churches. We would deeply appreciate your prayers for our work.

The Committee has a valuable role to play in the life of the EFCC, and I have enjoyed getting to know the Committee, the directors of the Board and the staff well during the last year. We bear one another's burdens, but we also laugh together, and I am so thankful for our unity in Christ.

At the time of writing the Committee is made up of myself as Chairman, Digby

James as Vice-Chairman. Jackie Brown, Calvin Coulter, Phil Curtis, Gwynne Evans, Josh Fortune, Nick Gray, Mark Ladds, Keith Plant, Matt Rees. Rob Childs is a member as well in his role as editor of *in-Fellowship*. Paul Walker serves in his capacity as Operations Manager as secretary, and Tom Brand attends as Ministry Director. I am thankful for all of them and would ask you to remember the Committee in your prayers; privately and corporately.

One dear brother I want to mention is Peter Beale. Peter served the EFCC in so many ways, but in my time on the Committee, Peter was the candidates' secretary. He was promoted to glory in September, and I loved Peter dearly, and miss him immensely. A gracious brother who served with good humour and great wisdom, and always wanted what was best for the fellowship. We know dear Peter heard those words from the Saviour, 'Well done good and faithful servant'.

There are many different churches in the EFCC family of churches, some with resources, some without, some with local trustees, others the EFCC support as trustees, some larger, some smaller; but the one thing we have in common is we love the church. The church is the Bride of Christ, the pearl of great value. My prayer for our churches is that we do not

desire to be popular, but we pray for the Lord's help to be faithful.

As we consider the wider scene in the UK, with many challenges to the church, with many professing churches walking away from biblical truth; let us encourage biblical, gospel work, by continuing in the EFCC to pursue biblical faithfulness, in the fear of the Lord.

I was so encouraged these past few weeks to have visited Northern Ireland. and I spoke at their fraternal and was able to meet and enjoy fellowship with pastors and trainees. there. We considered Exodus 2 together, and how God trained an imperfect man, Moses, for His service. After all, Moses was 80 when God really started using him to be the deliverer of His people, which means I for one, am still a boy! But the last words of Exodus 2 have greatly impressed themselves upon me:

'And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.'

What a comfort and encouragement and help for our ministries—God hears, God remembers His covenants, God sees, and it is all encapsulated in those two beautiful words—God knows. God knows! He really does.





## Paul Walker

Operations Manager

# A Legacy for future Generations

Giving generously to the life and ministry of those particularly set aside for the Lord's work is a fundamental part of our discipleship as Christians. As a people redeemed at great price, we respond generously and in love for our Lord with our 'first fruits'—the best of our resources, to His cause.

A large proportion of the EFCC's assets are due to the legacy of previous generations, and this has enabled the work of supporting and growing healthy churches to move forward to a scale and extent that could not have been envisaged when the EFCC was formed in 1967. Members of individual EFCC fellowships are warmly invited to consider making a legacy, small or large, in favour of the EFCC when they are called home as a wonderful means of providing for the work in future generations. We are enormously grateful for the provision provided to us by the Lord's people.

To assist folk who may be prayerfully considering providing for the EFCC in a Will, the information set out below provides a guide to the practical considerations to consider.

### **Older Wills**

You may have already done this many years ago and, if so, it is important to note that if a Will was prepared before the passing of the United Reform Act 1972 in favour of the old Congregational Union of England and Wales (Incorporated) then in order to ensure funds reach the EFCC it is necessary to alter the Will to the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.

### **Wills to the EFCC**

It is particularly helpful if any legacies are stated to be for the general purposes of the EFCC, rather than imposing any particular restrictions or conditions. The reasons for this are twofold: the situation envisaged when the Will was made may have changed, hopefully many years later, when the Will comes into effect; and also the absence of restrictions allows the EFCC to target the funds to meet the needs of our work as they stand at the time. It is the desire of the EFCC to steward its resources well so that they can be used in a God honouring way to grow healthy churches that hold to the full counsel of God and proclaim it, through faithful preaching, to a needy day and generation.

Specimen forms of bequest are set out opposite:

**"I give to the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches of EFCC Office, Latimer Congregational Church, Grovehill Road, Beverley, East Yorkshire HU17 9JD (Registered Charity Number: 262802) the sum of ....."**

**"I give to the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches of EFCC Office, Latimer Congregational Church, Grovehill Road, Beverley, East Yorkshire HU17 9JD (Registered Charity Number: 262802) a [ADD PERCENTAGE (i.e. 25%)] of share of my Residuary Estate."**

**"I give to the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches of EFCC Office, Latimer Congregational Church, Grovehill Road, Beverley, East Yorkshire HU17 9JD (Registered Charity Number: 262802) my property... Ie Deed Numbered..."**

It is always advisable that any Will is prepared by a properly qualified solicitor who specialises in the preparation of Wills. This is the best way to ensure that your wishes are carried out without the risk that an error in the drafting or legal requirements of a Will produces unintended consequences. If your solicitor

needs any additional guidance on the wording of the Will, then guidance can be provided through the EFCC's Office.

Please also be aware that gifts to charity are not subject to Inheritance Tax, and this is particularly relevant to any individuals whose total estate is over the Inheritance Tax free limit (currently £325,000).

## **A closing thought**

Peter encouraged the people of God in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia with these words in his first letter:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" 1 Peter 1:3-4

We thank God for the truth of this scripture—what a wonderful inheritance we share as the people of God! As we journey through life as pilgrims in a foreign land whose true citizenship is in heaven, let us consider every means at our disposal to ensure that others may come to know Christ and receive the best inheritance ever that counts for eternity!



# Growing Healthy Churches

Ministry Coordinator Steve Horton report on how EFCC is working to exalt Christ in growing healthy churches

*Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.*

*Psalms 127:1*

I wonder if you have read any of the books on church growth, church planting, or church revitalisation. If you have, you may have shared my thoughts about how the various models displayed by the authors fail to match my present situation. The community which my church serves is never mentioned in the textbooks! That isn't because my church is a difficult church to work with or because it's an easy church to work with. Rather because my church is unique. There is not another one like mine. But neither is there another one like yours.

Churches are made up of people and no two individuals are the same (even identical twins can be separated by those who know them well). So, every church must be unique. The people who are already there are unique and the people that God will join to your church next year will also be unique.

There are, of course, personality traits that help us manage our interactions with people and processes which have proved to be helpful in growing healthy churches. But overall our dependence has to be upon the one who is building His church. Unless the Lord builds our churches, we labour in vain. And, if you will forgive a paraphrase, in 2022/23 experience has shown time and time again

that the Lord is building His church, so our labours are not in vain. Time and time again, we see our Sovereign God acting in power and exceeding the expectations of even the most committed believer. Allow me to recount a few highlights in the life of some small EFCC churches.

Crystal Peaks Church (CPC) was planted by Wycliffe Church in January 2013 with 13 adults and their children covenanting to form a new church in the south of Sheffield. Growth was slow but there was a recognition that God was taking the church forward using the skills that He had given. Year followed year, and CPC reported this person or that person coming to faith but progress was slow. And then Covid interrupted everything. Coming out of Covid was as hard for CPC as any church but the Lord was slowly building His church and the 13 adults had grown to around 25.

Then, midway through 2022, a local Congregational church closed and the sale of the assets was distributed between the five closest Congregational churches. Both CPC and Wycliffe were surprised recipients of £36,000. Both sets of elders met together and considered a variety of ways to use this gift from the Lord. But, very quickly, there was unanimity that the money should be used to fund a two-year assistant-pastor position, that would sit across both churches with the objective of developing a man to move into full-time pastoral ministry. The hope is that, at the end of the two years, the assistant could take on a role within either church

or move into ministry within EFCC. Currently, the selection process is nearing its conclusion. But the point to be recognised is that neither church planned for this, nor had the resources. But the Lord who builds His church absolutely had plans and resources.

However, that isn't quite the end of this account because, since January of this year, CPC has been joined by 7 mature believers, spanning the age ranges between 20 and 60. This small church now averages 40 on a Sunday and is wondering what the Lord has in store given that they should have an assistant helping them from September, and so many new members have recently joined that a new home group has had to be formed! And, if we are honest, EFCC had no contribution to any of this and neither, really, did the church. God was in action. However, 6 years earlier, EFCC made it possible for CPC to move into their present home by facilitating the purchase of an old Methodist Chapel. Back then – God used his servants; this year, God appears to be moving single-handedly. How could you write that in a textbook on church planting?

But the Lord is working differently elsewhere. Bulkington Congregational is another small EFCC church and, last year, Peter Beale was taken to glory. Peter was a lynchpin of the church—you name it, he did it. And a particular difficulty was in covering Peter's financial skills as Treasurer. However, EFCC was able to provide help with the

church accounts so that Peter's absence would not be so damaging to the church. The church is still small but the pastor is able to concern himself with pastoring the flock, not worry about book-keeping.

But the Lord is working differently elsewhere. Junction 1 church, near Bromsgrove, recently joined EFCC. They are a fledgling church, having first gathered only 3 years ago and being formally constituted in 2022. And the Lord has added to the church so that they are now looking to move to a larger location. In February 2023, the church appointed a Teaching and Pastoral Lead (Steve) and a Ministry Development and Outreach Lead (Rachael); both on a very low salary but with the expectation that God will grow His church. The lack of elders has left the new pastor in a vulnerable position, however, EFCC was able to provide help with one of our staff acting as an 'external elder', meeting routinely with Steve and Rachael to encourage them and support them.

Three scenarios—The Lord building His church in three very different ways; EFCC involved providing three very different types of support. But our great joy is that our labours are not in vain.



Junction One Church, near Bromsgrove

# Women's Ministry

EFCC's new Women's Ministry Coordinator, Hilary Wilkinson reports on this growing work.

I am very thankful to the Lord for all I have seen him do in the time I have been in this role. I started working for EFCC at the beginning of November 2022 and have seen the Lord answer so many prayers in that time. Having never been a member of an EFCC church until Ross took up the pastorate in Alderholt in September 2023, it has been a joy to start getting to know the various churches in the fellowship and understanding the different situations and contexts a little better.

The first highlight has to be the people. I have been steadily working my way through a list of ministry wives to try and get to know them better and understand how I can help support and link them up. I'm aware that many churches in EFCC are on the smaller side and that can mean our ministers and their wives are carrying loads in a fairly isolated way, compared with, say, larger churches which are able to employ staff teams. I feel burdened to ensure that ministry wives know they are not alone. We know that the Devil loves to whisper lies in the believer's ear. One of those lies is that the

believer is on his/her own, with no help available. A discouraged wife can hugely impact the minister and that in turn can affect the whole church. I know first-hand that when I've been discouraged or felt very alone, it has had a significant effect on my husband. The opposite is also true; an encouraged and encouraging wife can be used greatly by God in the life of a pastor. I have often finished a phone call to a ministry wife and felt so blessed to have been able to have spent time chatting and praying with a minister's wife, knowing that there has been mutual encouragement. God really does bless the meetings of even twos and threes.

The second main highlight for me has been the EFCC Women's Conference 2023: A Call To Faithfulness. Helen Thorne spoke from 1 Peter 4 and gave three sessions: Faithful in Sanctification, Faithful in Service and Faithful in Suffering. When the EFCC Women's Team were discussing potential topics for this year's conference, the subject of faithfulness came up in the light of emerging from the Coronavirus pandemic. Obviously, the pandemic was difficult for everyone and for many churches, there was the added discouragement of seeing people drift, which when you are a smaller church anyway, hits especially hard. The wonderful thing about the conference was seeing people encouraged and convicted by God's Word. In the second session, Helen spoke on serving faithfully from 1 Peter 4:7-11. She drew our attention to the fact that Peter did not expect believers to do this in isolation, but together with church





family. With eyes on the Lord's return (v7), we are to pray together and be involved in each other's lives (v8-10). As we pray, we help each other to be alert (v7) and can give gentle accountability as we help each other grow. Several women were really challenged about the need to be praying together. We had 15 ladies from Alderholt Chapel come to the conference and it was a huge encouragement for me to hear them articulate their desire to pray as sisters. Other women from a couple of other churches said similar things to me and were going home planning prayer meetings. Please pray these happen. One lady in our church is a fairly new Christian. She has suffered greatly coming to Christ as many of her friends in her old life have deserted her, not understanding why she doesn't want to spend time drinking any more. Listening to her talk about Helen's third session (Faithfulness in Suffering) was a personal highlight for me. Furthermore, Helen had shared her testimony on the Friday night which really struck a chord with this lady as there were many similarities in their stories.

I must admit that the conference was a lot of work and at times, it felt that I was embroiled in practicalities and that was taking me away from the 'meat' of my role. However, when I saw the Lord working, I was so encouraged. There is great benefit in getting people together in this way. For many of our women who are plodding on faithfully in smaller churches, it was spiritually refreshing to be in a much larger gathering with space away from daily life to hear God's word and respond prayerfully.

I am excited for the conference next year. It is planned for 26th-27th April at Hayes Centre and the hope is that as a team, we can focus more on the shape of the conference as things like catering will be organised for us by the centre.

Going forward, I have more space now to be thinking about ministry wives' meet-ups. I am planning initially to focus on on-line gatherings but also have in mind a couple of in-person meet-ups. There is also the ongoing need for wives to be linked up who are in especially tricky situations and could do with one-on-one support.

# World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship

Mike Plant, WECF President

Hopefully, like everything else, the WECF is emerging from Covid and lockdown. It is a reality that in some countries, where there is not a strong healthcare system, that both personnel and leadership have been lost during the last couple of years. In Europe this is particularly so in regard to the Roma communities, but world-wide, given that WECF has constituent members in a number of relatively impoverished areas, this has had an impact. Sadly, for reasons we still do not fully understand, WECF had largely lost our contacts with the NACC churches in the Philippines. In God's goodness it has been possible for contacts to be renewed, and we are hopeful that the NACC churches will soon be able to reorganise. Whatever the problems may have been, they have been internal rather than directly linked to WECF. Nonetheless, situations where relationships which have been invested in over many years can, due to internal difficulties, cease to be fruitful and become causes of sadness rather than joy.

Recently, due to the generosity of churches within the WECF, the Central Church in Skopje, North Macedonia have been enabled to pay for substantial repairs to the building. It is important to realize that countries in Eastern Europe can be substantially impoverished. It is a particular joy that two young men, Nikolai and Angel, who are involved in church leadership in North Macedonia, are to attend the forthcoming WECF Triennial Conference in Velingrad, Bulgaria. We need to be much in prayer that, unlike

many of their contemporaries, these young men will continue in sacrificial ministry in their own country rather than joining the youth and brain drain to the West.



Bethel ECC Dharan, Nepal

We are also encouraged that, with the support of the churches in Manipur, North India, the churches in Nepal are growing. Both in Nepal and India there is a risk of harsh anti-conversion legislation impacting the churches negatively, so we need to remember them in our prayers.

While it is sad from the point of view of the conference, we should actually see the fact that currently no Brazilians are booked to attend—which is very untypical—as being an encouragement. The reason that they can't attend is that they are committed to large-scale evangelistic outreach in their own country. This continues to be fruitful and encouraging with new churches regularly being planted and established.

Particular prayer is needed for the future of WECF as we appoint new officers for the coming years. I am due to step down as President and there is a need for new and younger leadership to emerge.

# Infellowship

Rob Childs, Editor

Infellowship is 'For and about the good news of Jesus Christ and the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.' It is our prayer that over the last twelve months we, the editorial team, have been enabled to fulfil that brief in the strength which God supplies and by the gracious, informative and often insightful contributions from many of you, the pastors, leaders, members and friends of the churches of the Fellowship.

We have received many reports of the gospel work among the churches across the Fellowship including a summer mission at St. Ives and ongoing revitalisation at several West Midlands churches. Keith Wilson, Pastor of Ashford Congregational Church in Surrey helpfully encouraged us to engage fully and enthusiastically in evangelism, teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade. His feature article over two issues was illustrated with many photographs of folk in our churches doing just that in their local communities. Many of our churches are small in number, but as Calvin Coulter wrote early in 2023, there is great encouragement for gospel faithfulness in the strengths and benefits of being few in number, as well as a sure hope that we will continue to see the Kingdom of God grow as the Lord Jesus Christ builds his Church.

We have reported on the appointment of EFCC's first dedicated Women's Ministry Coordinator, Hilary Wilkinson, and you can read about her work in her own words elsewhere in this report book. We

also welcomed a new committee chairman James Devenish, Pastor of Lake Road Chapel, Keswick who has been getting stuck into the work of the committee, encouraging the churches and building a foundation for the future ministry of EFCC.

The debates over conversion therapy rumble on, and the failure of the Church of England to take a gospel stand on related issues means that it is all the more important that we take hold of the clear biblical teaching on this issue. During 2022 EFCC Ministry Director Tom Brand was part of the authorial team which produced the Greater Love Declaration, 'a clear and pastorally warm statement of God's good design for human flourishing in marriage and sexuality now as in all ages.

'It has been encouraging once again to report on several new ministers coming into Fellowship churches across the country. Pray the Lord that he would raise up a new generation of faithful men to the ministry and faithful believers who can stand on the Scriptures.

Sadly for us who remain, Peter Beale, who for 20 years was editor of Congregational Concern (the previous name of Infellowship), was called home to be with his Lord and Saviour in September. Peter also served for many years on the EFCC committee as Pastoral Candidate Secretary and a Regional Secretary and is a great loss to us all, but heaven's great gain.

# Financial Statements

For the year ended 31st December 2022  
Luke Taylor, Accountant

Included within the report book are the accounts for the General Purposes Fund. By way of a reminder, the General Purposes Fund accounts show only those items which are relevant to the income and expenditure, assets and liabilities associated with the day to day running of the EFCC organisation.

## General Purposes Fund

The final page of the General Purposes Fund accounts shows the detailed statement of financial activities showing the income and expenditure incurred in the year ended 31 December 2022 with the figures for the previous year also included as a comparison. This shows that the costs of running the Fellowship, during 2022, increased by £24,860 to a total of £167,514 compared to £142,654 in 2021. Income for the 2022 has also increased

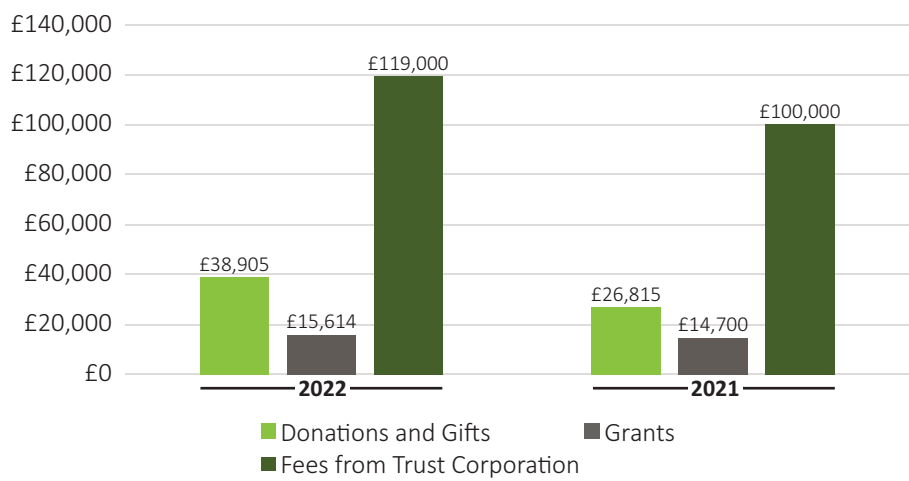
when compared to 2021 being £173,537 in 2022 reflecting an increase of 32,022. These net increases in both income and expenditure are explored in more detail below.

The total income for 2022 exceeded the total expenditure and as such a net income figure of £6,023 is reported in the financial statements which compares to a net expenditure position in 2021 of £1,139.

The income received into the General Purposes fund continues to be from three main sources, these being gifts from individual and churches, grants and income received from Trust Corp in the form of a management charges.

In the year under review gifts from churches and individuals increased to £38,905 from £26,815 in the prior year.

## General Purpose Fund - Income Analysis



While this increase is positive £10,000 of the increase here is attributable to one legacy received during 2022. Grant income shows a slight increase at £15,614 in 2022 when compared to £14,700 in 2021, this being the Memorial Hall Grant received.

Management charges to the Trust Corporation have continued to increase with the total charges in 2022 being £119,000, an increase of £19,000 compared to 2021. The management charges reported in 2022 are reflective of the funds that have been transferred from Trust Corporation into the General Purposes Fund to ensure that it has sufficient cash flow to satisfy costs as these have fallen due and continues to be necessary to ensure that the General Purposes Fund was able to operate without creating a significant deficit.

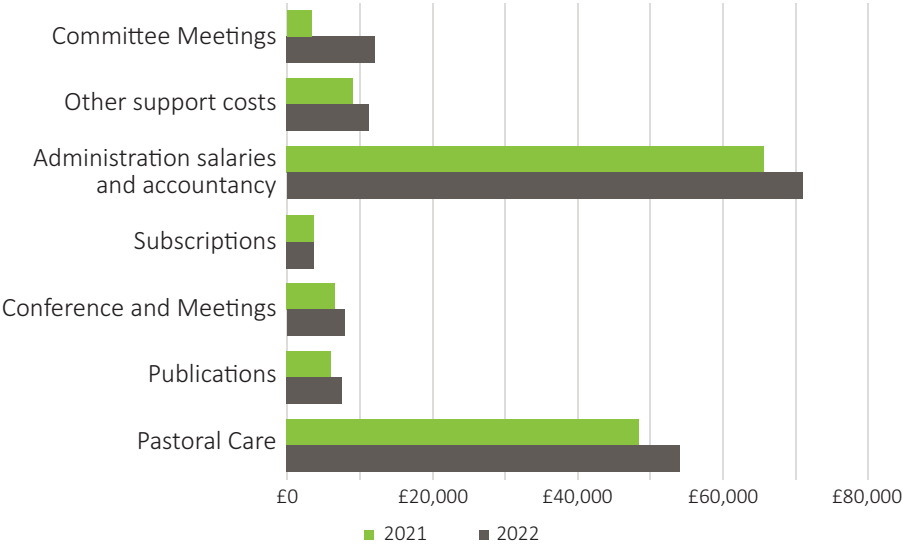
Charitable activity costs have again increased by £8,520 when compared with

the previous year which can be attributed to increases in Regional Secretary costs, publication costs and meeting costs. Cost increases here are linked to inflationary rises, increased travel and a return to more in person meetings and prayer conferences.

Support costs at £94,373 have also increased compared to 2021. The increase of £16,340 can mainly be attributed to increased Committee meeting costs as these have returned to being held in-person as well as inflationary salary increases.

In summary the General Purposes Fund accounts show a net income position in year the which has increased the overall net assets position to just under £40,000. The income received from Trust Corp has been and will continue to be crucial to maintaining this position and to enable the Fellowship to continue operating in the current form.

## General Purpose Fund - Expenditure Analysis



# Gospel Growth

Matt Rees, Committee member and Pastor of St. Briavels Congregational Church encourages us to be optimistic about church growth

What is the trajectory of the Church of Jesus Christ? Whilst we may have different views on Jesus's return and the last things, all Christians agree on certain things. We believe that the gospel will be preached throughout the whole world, that heaven will be populated with believers from every nation, and that Christ will build his church and the gates of hell won't overcome it. Our fundamental assumption about the church is optimistic—Jesus wins! We can sing, in the words of William Williams, 'Onward march all-conquering Jesus!' We expect to see growth in his church.

If that is true of the universal church, Christ's people worldwide, then we can expect to see it playing out in the local churches that constitute it, but that is a general principle not an absolute rule. It is not a guarantee as to what happens in any given situation, and God sometimes removes lampstands (Rev. 2:5). God's sovereignty as displayed in the life of the local church is sometimes (often?) mysterious but if Christ is going to build his Church, he's going to usually use the usual means. He's going to grow local churches.



Therfield Chapel

## **If we expect such gospel growth, what might we do to nurture it?**

On the one hand, we can do nothing—our churches grow under the sovereign hand of the head of the Church. That's a humbling reminder, but also our great comfort: It's not our church, it's not our job to grow churches. 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.' (1Cor. 3:6)

On the other hand, because he is sovereign, we are diligent in applying ourselves to the ordinary means of grace that he has given. Faithful preaching that expounds the Word of God, the right administration of the sacraments, discipling the flock to equip every believer for service, establishing biblically qualified, plural leadership and good governance and structures within the church, fervent prayer both individually and corporately, deepening of the fellowship within the church family, and boldly reaching out to those outside.

Some of those are practical things that can be put in place now; don't wait until your church membership grows to have a useable constitution, don't wait until you want to start a Sunday School to draw up a robust safeguarding policy. Some of those are fundamentals present in every healthy church; faithful preaching is at the centre of our gathering whether we are a congregation of 5 or 500. Some of those are both signs of growth and stimuli to further growth; in establishing plural leadership we recognise that Christ is giving gifts to his church to equip it for

further ministry. Some of those may take time to come to fruition; identifying, training and appointing leaders takes years. Some of those can be started immediately; you can put aside this article and recommit to praying over these things right now.

### **If we expect such gospel growth, how do we respond when it comes?**

Firstly, we humbly give thanks! It is so obvious, but possible in the excitement of a growing work, to lose sight of this: 'The Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes!' (Ps. 118:23)



Ashford Congregational Church

Secondly, we adapt. Growth produces change. As my children have grown some changes have been welcome (I don't miss the 3 am crying) but others are harder to live with (the queue for the shower). Growth produces change, some of which can be difficult but change is inevitable until Jesus returns. As a church changes, we must love one another deeply, forgive each other quickly and guard our unity. How many thriving, growing works have been rendered ineffective through discord and division?

Thirdly, we pray against our enemy. Because Jesus is at work, growing his church, building his kingdom and reaching the lost—you may be certain that the prince of this world will rage and batter



Bere Regis Chapel

such churches, wanting, if he could to thwart the plans of Christ. Pray against him, repent of sin, and put pride to death.

Lastly, we cry out to God for more. We haven't yet exhausted his bounty. Pray that he would be increasingly glorified. We don't turn inward, smug at our newly thriving condition, rather we pray for more, and to see it in the church down the road from us and in the churches throughout our Fellowship.

### **If we expect such gospel growth, what about when we don't see it?**

We remind ourselves of the glory that is attached to each local church. Small churches can preach Christ, make disciples, and encourage one another in their faith regardless of size. Indeed some things, like knowing each other and being members of one another, they can do in ways that larger churches never can. To be a part of the church of Jesus, large or small, is a glorious thing.

We don't have the capacity to gauge 'success'. The seed that has been sown over many years springs up without our input, sometimes without our ever knowing. Like Daniel's friends, we believe 'the God we serve is able to deliver us... But even if he does not...' (Dan. 3:18) He is altogether good, worthy of our praise, adoration and faithfulness.

## Mission Statement: Exalting Christ in growing healthy churches

This is why the EFCC exists, its direction and purpose. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is building his Church, we must keep our eyes on him in all things because he is our Saviour and the head of the church which is the body.

### We seek to meet our mission with 6 core objectives

No.	Core Objectives	Practical Steps
1	Calling Pastors	We recognise that the provision of a pastor is a gift from God to his Church and vital to the growth and life of our churches. Churches need leaders who are spiritually qualified, committed to the work of the Gospel and able to preach, teach and spiritually nourish the people of God. Without an effective and godly pastor many churches simply wither on the vine. The EFCC is committed to helping to enable its churches to find and call pastors by being committed to practically supporting them, as partners in the gospel, through the finding process with prayer, godly discernment and with practical commitment.
2	Supporting Pastors	The EFCC is committed to nourishing and growing its pastors spiritually and supporting their ministry practically to allow them to flourish in their calling to lead and sustain healthy churches.
3	Replanting and Revitalising Churches	In partnership with the local church, the EFCC will seek to discern God given opportunities to support replanting and revitalisation work with spiritual and practical support with the aim of restoring living, vibrant and Christ focused local churches.
4	Sharing, Growing and Connecting	The EFCC provides a spiritual family for a diverse group of Christ's churches connected together as Evangelical Congregational Churches, united in a shared Basis of Faith and agreement with the EFCC's Position Papers, with a shared desire to care, support and encourage each other prayerfully, spiritually and materially.
5	Supporting Healthy Church Governance	Particularly through the EFCC Trust Corporation, the EFCC actively and practically supports churches in ensuring that they are well managed and meet their financial and legal obligations, thereby ensuring that the Church of Christ is of good repute in acting wisely, judiciously and well in the management of its activities.
6	Caring and providing for the welfare of Christ's Church	Remembering Christ's example, the EFCC actively and carefully stewards its resources to enable it make provision for the welfare of individuals within the EFCC church family.

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