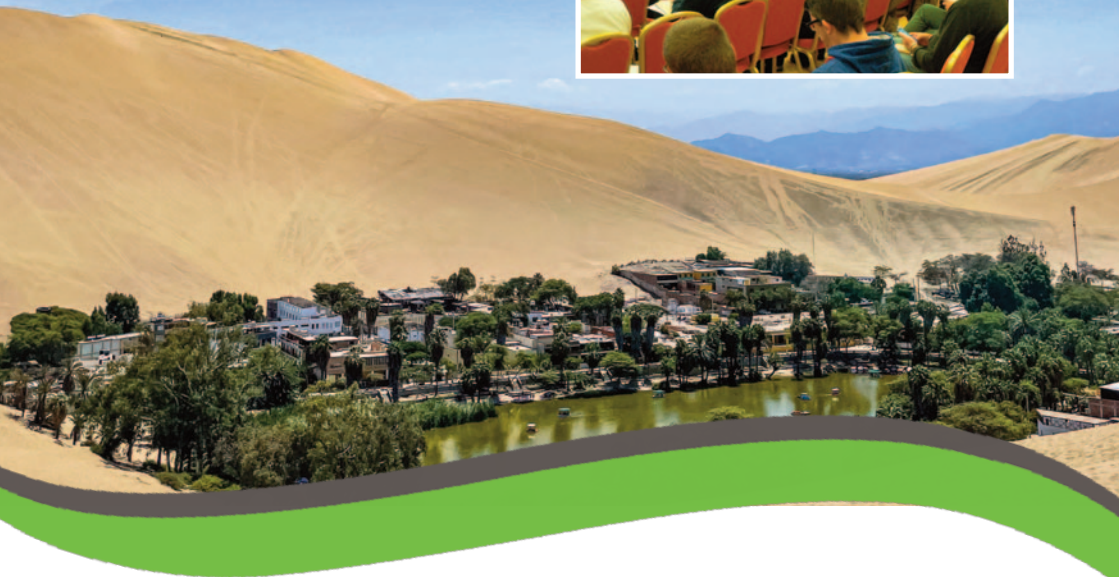




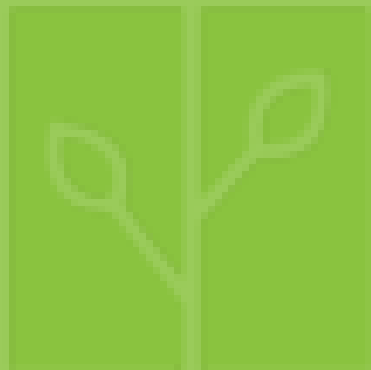
**EFCC**

exalting Christ in growing  
healthy churches

# Annual Review 2024



# Gospel Focus in a Hostile Culture



Tom Brand  
Ministry Director

# Introduction

Welcome to the annual review booklet, a snapshot of the EFCC over the year.

We are all about exalting Christ in growing healthy churches and over this year we have seen more and more of the Lord's kindness and mercy to us as a fellowship and in individual churches. We fix our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ the head of the church, the judge of all the earth and the Saviour of sinners.

One of the central encouragements of the last year has been the deepening spirituality of many pastors in our network. Increasingly there is an urgent desire to cry out to God and seek His face as the starting point of all Christian ministry. I've spoken to pastors who are planning extended times to seek the Lord's presence in prayer, and one recently read through the whole Bible in forty days!

We spent time considering these issues at our conference (AGM) in May 2023, with the connections with evangelism and the growth of the local church. It was also a key focus in the Ministers' Prayer Conference last year which was a remarkably blessed time of teaching and fellowship.

I want to share several more encouragements with you dear friends and several points for our prayers.



A huge part of our desire to grow healthy churches is helping churches call a pastor. In Ephesians 4:10-12 Paul the Apostle speaks of pastors as a gift from the risen Christ to His church. The number of pastor-less churches in the EFCC has decreased a lot in recent years which is wonderful, but a problem we now face is the lack of godly and competent men coming forward for ministry. Godly men who love the Lord and his word and who are called to the Christian ministry. We are not alone in facing this difficulty, in my regular meetings with church network and seminary leaders this problem is increasingly challenging across the UK.

When I consider this problem and its implications, I am profoundly encouraged by the knowledge that the primary responsibility for the growth of churches and the calling of pastors is not mine, nor the EFCC's nor the individual church's – it is Christ's! Christ has promised to build His church and Christ will do it. And as He commanded us, we cry out to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers (Matthew 9:38) into the Lord's harvest field.

The second main element of growing healthy churches is revitalisation and re-planting. One particularly encouraging example of this recently is Stanwell Congregational Church in London. The church recently and unanimously called Mark Pratt to be the pastor and the church is being supported locally by Staines and Ashford – both EFCC churches. Please pray that the Lord will mightily bless the work there. He is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20-21). So we

pray boldly!

More broadly, in God's goodness, we have been able greatly to strengthen the Ministry Coordinator team this year with John Woolley covering South Wales and the South-West of England. He serves as the pastor at Libanus Church in Swansea. We have also appointed Hilary Wilkinson as the Women's Ministry Coordinator. Hilary is married to Ross who is the pastor at Alderholt Chapel. It is such a joy to work with them both and see the difference they have made in serving our churches and working with the team.

We're in the process of talking with a couple of evangelical churches who are interested in joining the EFCC which is brilliant. We want to serve and help local churches from the largest to the smallest and it's a joy to see the EFCC family grow.

The EFCC enjoys wider fellowship with other church networks, denominations and Christian organisations through Affinity. It has been exciting to be part of the discussions and plans for Affinity to form The Gospel Coalition UK. If, God willing, this goes forward, it will be a brilliant opportunity to strengthen the Reformed Evangelical voice in the UK and build meaningful connections across conservative evangelicalism worldwide. I've written about this in the May edition of InFellowship.

I hope you're encouraged and blessed as you read through this annual review – there are some inspiring articles. The Lord has been very good to us as a family of churches, but we long for more of His presence and more of His reviving power amongst us.

God's grace to you,

**Tom Brand**





# Trust Board

A desert is a barren area of land where little rain occurs and consequently, living conditions are hostile for life. The lack of vegetation exposes the unprotected surface of the ground to the processes of denudation and the creation of the rippling sands across vast areas that we are so familiar with. People often use the adjectives 'hot', 'dry', and 'empty' to describe deserts, but these words do not tell the whole story. Most deserts, far from being empty and lifeless, are home to a variety of plants, animals, and other organisms. People have adapted to life in the desert for thousands of years.

As faithful churches, we undoubtedly find ourselves in a desert-like hostile environment. There is widespread indifference to the wonderful hope in Christ we hold out, wrong is often worshipped as right, and right is condemned by our society. Laws are incrementally changing making operating as churches difficult. Many regulations can be seen to be good in their intentions, but keeping up with constant changes is draining. The demographics of our congregations seem to be more towards the upper end and those of working age are distracted and diverted by the stresses of life in our busy world. This makes filling key positions like pastors,

treasurers, church secretaries and other leadership roles challenging. Remaining faithful to the whole counsel of God as revealed in the Bible is hard and yet in our churches, we see wonderful expressions of gospel-fuelled oases punctuating the barrenness with life and vibrant expressions of Christ's kingdom.

Our mission statement, 'to exalt Christ, in growing healthy churches' takes many different forms and over recent years we have built a multifaceted approach to supporting and nurturing our churches to thrive in this apparently hostile environment. At this year's AGM, we will be focusing on revisions to our Position Papers – important and carefully considered distillations of the Biblical truth on which we firmly stand. Alongside this and other more overtly spiritual work, our Trust Board is an important element of the EFCC that essentially promotes practical and governance-related health.

The Trust Corporation since its formation has held trusteeships on behalf of EFCC churches. In recent years we have had to grapple with balancing that area of support with our much-cherished principles of congregational independency. In many churches, simply being able to find the number of individual trustees required





can be very difficult. Other church groupings have moved away from holding trusteeships as being just too complicated and risky. Our Board has recognised the support provided is just too valuable to cast aside and has struck an important balance in continuing to hold custodian /holding trusteeships of church buildings.

Every church is different and, though there are many common issues, tailoring our support to the individual church is important. Sitting alongside the spiritual support provided through our Ministry Director Tom and the team of Ministry Coordinators, our dedicated Trusteeship Coordinator Kevin Davies is available to all our churches to provide governance-related support. Kevin also covers the important area of safeguarding as our designated lead, helping our churches to keep up to speed with this ever-developing area.

Revitalisation is costly. The Lord's servants called to revitalise churches face unparalleled challenges. Changing hearts, minds and practices towards gospel focus and spiritual health invariably brings with it conflict and hard decisions. Managing often old and crumbling buildings when you want to get on with growing a church is an unwelcome drain. In small church situations, the absence of a plurality of leaders can lead to isolation. Having the added worry of where the funds will come from adds another dimension. The Trust Corporation is in for revitalisation for the long haul and has supported revitalisations in recent years with unprecedented levels of funding and with the practical support that is so important to revitalisation pastors. We are partners in the gospel in revitalisation.

I've highlighted here a few key and important areas of the Trust Corporation's work, there are many more, and you might ask where the resources come from to be able to do so. The obvious answer to that question is the Lord, but the Lord also calls us to steward resources to produce bountiful fruit. The combination of varied skills, gospel-heartedness, and faithfulness found on our Board has allowed the EFCC to steward its resources well. I want to finish this short article on the Board's role, by paying tribute to these men and their important underpinning work that goes on behind the scenes to allow the EFCC and its churches to flourish.



**Paul Walker**

EFCC Operations Manager

# 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 am stepping down at this AGM, as we as a family are in the process of relocating to the USA. It is a long story which began when I was pastoring and leading a Christian School in Vienna. I hope in the Lord's kindness, to continue to pastor in Mississippi, with the Presbyterian Church in America.

I am thankful that Calvin Coulter, God willing, will succeed me as chairman of the Committee. Calvin brings a lot of gifts to the table, is pastorally able, and above all desires to serve the Lord through his ministry at Knockbracken and with the EFCC. Digby James will continue as vice-chairman, and I would like to thank him for his selfless devotion to the role, I am thankful for both brothers. It is a privilege

to call them my friends.

I am thankful for the partnership and friendship I have enjoyed with Gwynne Evans as Chairman of the Trust Board; he has faithfully served the Lord in pastoral ministry and the EFCC for many years and would like to put on record my thanks for his faithful service.

The Committee consists of elected representatives of our churches who faithfully serve the EFCC fellowship, often alongside busy ministries and work commitments. Their dedication to the Lord's churches has been obvious during my chairmanship and I am very thankful to God for the service of Jackie Brown, Rob Childs, Calvin Coulter, Phil Curtis, Gwynne Evans, Josh Fortune, Nick Gray, Digby James, Mark Ladds, Matt Rees, Keith Plant. Josh Fortune will be stepping down at this year's AGM after serving for the last 3 years and Steve Horton will, God willing, return to being an elected

member from 2024 after attending meetings in an advisory capacity as a Ministry Coordinator in recent years. I am also grateful for the support of Tom Brand, the EFCC's Ministry Director and Paul Walker, the EFCC's Operations Manager – both are dedicated to the EFCC's mission of exalting Christ in growing faithful gospel churches.

I reiterate what I have said before, 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.

We should not try to make our churches as close to the world as we can, but we must pursue Christ-likeness and biblical worship.

Last year I mentioned the last words of Exodus 2 which have continued to greatly impress 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 an 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.

Exodus 33 is after the people sinned grievously by thinking they could improve their worship of God by building a golden calf.

After all Yahweh had done, in saving His people by bringing them through the Red Sea, leading them through the wilder-

ness, and giving the law at Sinai; they built a golden calf.

In Exodus 33, God threatens not to go with the people to the land of promise. And it is a challenge, when it comes to the things of God, do we want the gifts, the benefits, and fail to see that the reward is God Himself?

The people then respond with mourning, recognizing God's word was disastrous.

In Moses establishing the tent of meeting outside the camp, we are reminded that what we need more than anything is God with us, the God who is here; not outside the camp, afar off, over there!

Then Moses intercedes again for the people, God relents, and God promises to go with them to the land of promise.

And it left me convicted, persuaded, that what we need above everything else, is for God to be with us.

We often pray quick prayers for those in need, "Lord be with so and so." And it can be tempting to think that is a weak, somewhat well-used prayer. But nothing could be further from the truth. What we need, really, really need, as opposed to what we really, really want; is for God to be with us.

Supremely we can see the face of God in the person and work of His Son.

So my parting words as chairman of the committee are – give thanks to God for His mercy and grace, that we know Him, through belief in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for use



**James Devenish**

Outgoing Committee  
Chairman



# Ministry



I figure six months in as an EFCC ministry coordinator still qualifies me to be seen as the new kid on the block. So, what are my early observations on the fellowship's churches in South Wales and southwest England? The stats on the 20 or so churches go like this. The majority have worshipping congregations of 30 or fewer attending. When I started in October 2023 50% had either a full-time or part-time pastor. For varying reasons we've seen 10% move on, so now less than half the congregations (40%) are served by a pastor-teacher. Another 10% say they are in a position to call a pastor, which means at present 20% of the churches are looking for a man but are finding it difficult. The remaining 40% of the churches are without pastors and at present have very little prospect of calling one.

Such statistics could be seen as discouraging, though they help us identify possible trends. The average size of our churches is numerically small. Many of our pulpits are without a consistent pastor-teacher. The figures also speak of something we all know, that these are dif-

ficult days for the cause of the gospel. Our churches are living and witnessing to Jesus in a relatively hostile environment, as Christianity is increasingly marginalised in 21st-century Britain. Our growing pluralistic and secular society is at best apathetic towards the gospel of Jesus, dismissive of his unique claims, and at worse growingly antagonistic towards the church; which is often caricatured as the ogre that threatens society's progress.

However, the stats cannot tell us that we worship and serve a Saviour who is mighty to save, the sovereign Lord of his church, who rules all things for his glory and the church's good. Our loving Saviour God has put a supreme value on every individual human soul he has created (Mark 8:36-38). Numbers, size, and growth have never been the preeminent goal of the church. The stats therefore cannot possibly tell the true extent of the divine purpose, which is at the heart of the story which is the church of Jesus Christ; a matter which only eternity will reveal. A matter Jesus' own challenging and intriguing words point to (Luke 18:8).



The difficulties our churches face in the 21st century have many causes, but they are not new to the church's experience. The New Testament, and early church history, reveal to us the phenomenal effort, and vast spiritual and physical energy, that the early followers of Jesus exerted as a very small minority in the hostile environment of the Roman World. Christianity, as the new brand on the supermarket shelf of religions on offer in Roman society, was viewed as *religio illicita*. Shunned, not recognised and frequently persecuted. Yet like the slow but inevitable spread of a lava flow the church's witness to the good news of Jesus permeated the consciousness of Roman society and turned it upside down (Acts 17:6).

The early Christians did not allow the odds stacked against them to overwhelm them, nor did they lack the confidence of faith to believe they would be changed. As lovers of Jesus, they sowed the truths of his gospel and continued to daily plod on in sharing their testimony to Jesus. A plodding typified in Paul's ministry. The spiritual heights and depths Paul experienced led him to be the consummate spiritual plodder. He displayed an insatiable appetite for the well-being of church life (2 Corinthians 11:28) and a commitment to church growth and new gospel ventures (Romans 15:20).

I have to tell you that as a new kid on the block, it has been a joy to find good men in pastoral positions who hold the faith once delivered and preach the apostolic gospel. Men who have a real love for Jesus and are expecting the Lord to work in his people and through the witness of his people. Whether it be in the far west of England; on the borders of Wales and

England; up in the Welsh valleys; on the plains of southern England or the south coast, these men are unafraid to proclaim Jesus as Lord. They are plodding away at building up the saints and seeking to reach the lost.

These pastors are joined by a small number of gospel causes that are standing against the rising tide that seeks to dismiss the good news of Jesus Christ; even if they are in an Isaiah promise-type stand (Isaiah 59.19). Faithful people in small congregations without pastors who, in the spirit of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5, 6), are far from the limelight, some getting on in years, who are quietly walking with Jesus and being faithful to their calling. I think of one church with only two members, who at present cannot meet on the Lord's Day because they have no minister to lead worship, yet is still keeping a lively, active, and much-appreciated presence in their local community through a thoughtful and generous use of their building.

These dear brethren may be few, these congregations may be small and by and large hidden from the limelight, but they epitomise the spirit of Luther's 'One with God is a majority.' They encapsulate the indomitable words of Athanasius, 'contra mundum' (Athanasius against the world). They are standing as 'shining lights in the world, holding fast the word of life' (Philippians 2:15, 16).



**John Woolley**

Regional Ministry  
Coordinator (South  
Wales and South-  
west England)

# Gospel Growth



Every year, as a birthday treat, my younger brother gets us tickets to watch a football game in one of the London stadiums. It's always an enjoyable time together, and the noise of the many voices singing in unison gives me goosebumps in anticipation of how much more glorious the voices around the throne of God will be. My brother and I, however, have never heard a final whistle in any of the games. We always leave early, wanting to beat the slow, bottlenecked shuffle of people seeking to exit the stadium at the end. Getting caught in one of these crowds is never a pleasant experience, slowly inching forward at a glacial pace until you can get clear of the exit- then it becomes a free-for-all sprint to the station. The difference in speed is stark!

In my almost ten years as a pastor (and two as a Scripture Reader for SASRA), it's struck me how many who claim to be Christians are like the shuffling crowd, seeking to leave the stadium. These dear folk don't make much progress over months, years, or even decades, whereas others, like those sprinting for a train, make rapid, discernibly encouraging strides in a short space of time. The difference? Principles that almost everyone reading this article will know, but principles that we constantly need to reiterate to ourselves: Read! Pray! Obey! Reading God's Word, praying it back to Him (and thus according to His will), and seeking to obey everything written in it transforms even the slowest shuffler into the one who makes the train!

It saddens me just how many who claim the name of Christ don't want to give Him anything more than lip service, let alone quality time in their day. And, as a result, there is no discernible fruit (or evidence of regeneration) in their lives. Even among many who are genuinely saved, there is a spiritual anaemia and lack of growth. I speak strongly about this because, for too long, I was one of the shufflers!

I wanted to share some encouraging things that the Lord has been doing in our church amongst a core group of people who have gone from shufflers to sprinters, and what that has meant for us moving forward. For context, our church is in the heart of South East London, and almost every attendee is from an African background. We live in a very diverse area, which can also be quite rough (we've had two drive-by shootings outside our church in the last three years alone).

It had to start with my wife and I, It's hard to take others where you have not been yourself. The Lord had to challenge me in how I spent my time and money, my family life, hobbies, goals and aims for life. I was living like a 'professional' pastor seeking just to get by (as comfortably and with as few real challenges as possible). Where was the denying myself and taking up the cross in my own life? Where was the cost? Where was the hunger for Scripture and the desperation to seek God's face? It was lacking- and there was little power in either my personal holiness or preaching. Over a few years, the Lord changed my wife and I, challenging us to be increasingly planted in His word (and, critically, to actually obey everything we read, rather than trying to hand-

wave it away), to cast a discerning eye on everything we watch, read, or listen to, asking ourselves, is this for His glory? Is it profitable? Bit by bit, we saw how our family life changed; more time was spent in Scripture together and increasingly radical lifestyle changes emerged. We still have a long way to go but, looking back at it now, the Lord clearly had to deal with us before He moved onto the church.

**Street Evangelism:** As a church, we now head out once per month onto the streets of Wool-

wich on a Saturday morning to engage people in conversation, asking the all-important question: 'Who is Jesus?' We've had some fantastic conversations as a result (mixed with a lot of hostility, as you might



imagine), but there is not one Saturday that we go out to the streets without feelings of nervousness and sometimes even fear. We seek to do this because we were challenged by how siloed we were for so long, disobeying the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations. In Woolwich, He has made it easier for us by bringing many nations to us! It's about 4 or 5 of us who regularly go out, and the growth in these dear folk (not to mention the camaraderie) has been such a joy to behold as they learn true dependence on the Spirit for boldness, and the need to study their Bibles for answering challenging conversations!



**Pro-Life work:** This newfound boldness has also spilt over into pro-life work. Two years ago we had Dave Brennan from Brephos come and speak at our church. He showed a video of an abortion on the screen and one could have heard a pin drop afterwards. There was a stunned silence. Why have we not done anything about this? We are told in scripture to rescue those being led away to death (Proverbs 24:11), and yet too many Christians are frightened to speak up. We knew that we could not overlook this command. Abortion is the moral issue of this day- what are we doing about it? As a result, we joined with CBRUK to do some displays on the streets of Woolwich, which resulted in a Nigerian mother deciding to renege on the plans she had for an abortion! We have an ongoing relationship with her now, bringing her kids to church every Sunday and running a Bible study with her on Thursdays. One of our younger members has even become one of the organisers for CBRUK and attends displays all over London. It's a scary experience but is so important. Please consider inviting Dave to come and speak at your churches.

**Discipleship & Prayer:** It's been a huge joy to serve together in these ways, which produces encouraging fruit. In my

first few years at the church, discipleship was almost purely academic and theoretical: evening meetings and working through books together, etc. This, of course, is very important, but it's not the whole picture! Seeking to actively be obedient to our Lord's teachings, together and in every area of life has made stronger disciples of those few who are willing to do it. It's also been so exciting to see the desire to pray continue to grow



in the church; we now meet together on Tuesday (open to the whole church) and Thursday evenings (for men or women's prayer triplet-type format) every week to spend time calling on God, and praying back to Him what we see in His Word. As a result, we are seeing more hunger for Bible reading in our church, including amongst some of those who have not committed to reading regularly in years!

We are certainly far from perfect and, like every church, there are many areas that I'm praying the Lord will grow us in, but having a front-row seat as He transforms lives and turns shufflers into sprinters has been the highlight of these past ten years. Please ask the Lord that more and more people will Read, Pray, and Obey.

## Josh Fortune

Committee Member and Pastor of Woolwich Congregational Church



# Infellowship

At the beginning of 2024, the 250th issue of the magazine was published. It is a great privilege to be a part of the legacy of informing and encouraging the churches of the Fellowship through the good news of Jesus Christ and reporting on the Lord's work among us.

Infellowship would not be all that it is without the contributions made by pastors, leaders, members and friends of the churches of the Fellowship, so on behalf of all our readers, thank you to everyone who has contributed. If you'd like to contribute to Infellowship then please do get in touch with me through the EFCC website.

In the last year, many churches have reported on their labours in the harvest fields. Ballycraig Congregational Church told us of their week-long tent mission, Neil Blake, Pastor of Hullbridge Free Church reported on the fruit of their revitalisation work, and the folk at Connsbrook were out on 1st July, reaching the crowds gathered near the church for the annual parades. The church at Droysden ran a week of outreach in the community, and several churches told us of new believers coming to Christ and baptisms taking place. We continue to pray for spiritual fruit from the labours of all our churches.

A great deal of work goes on across the Fellowship to support the churches and their Pastors. We reported on the appointment of John Woolley as Regional Ministry Coordinator for South Wales and Southwest England, and you can read his report elsewhere in this booklet. Historic

Congregational studies papers dating back to the 1980s were made available online for the first time, and churches were encouraged to get involved in the work of EFCC through the Committee elections.

Mike Plant stepped down from his position as president of the World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship (WECF) and shared his reflections on the international Congregational scene over the thirty-odd years of his involvement.

We reported on a range of contemporary issues over the year including Artificial Intelligence, Safeguarding, Discipleship, Holiness and true Christian Love. Philis Coulter shared her memories of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and how she was encouraged to trust in the Lord's plans for his people, and Iain Clements wrote on the need for faithfulness in serving the Lord without being weighed down.

This is far from a comprehensive report of the activities of our Fellowship, just a taste of the encouragement that we've tried to bring to you over the year. I hope that you'll continue to enjoy reading the magazine as much as I enjoy receiving your reports and contributions and that you'll continue to pray for your brothers and sisters across our Fellowship.

## **Rob Childs**

Editor, Infellowship

The image features a light-colored puzzle with one piece missing, revealing a dark blue piece underneath. The puzzle is set against a green background that contains the title 'Church Governance' in white serif font. The puzzle pieces are arranged in a grid, with the missing piece located in the upper left quadrant.

# Church Governance

Church governance, in the form of the members' meeting, is described as, 'secondary, but necessary' in the well-known manual of congregational independency, *Evangelical and Congregational*. Governance can seem quite a dry subject and very secondary when our heartfelt desire is to see the Gospel go out in power, Christ's church growing and men and women, boys and girls coming to a living and vibrant faith in Jesus. Yet good church governance provides the strong framework and means by which we as churches are able to fulfil the Great Commission and meet Paul's injunction to the Colossian Church to do all things well and 'as unto the Lord'.

Difficulties and challenges as we seek to do the work Christ has given us can seem overwhelming at times; not least around the seemingly ever-changing and growing degree of regulation that churches face, and that's where I can come in. I've been in post since 2020 as the EFCC Trusteeships Coordinator, a role dedicated to

supporting our churches in navigating church governance well.

I'm particularly focused on churches supported by the EFCC Trust Corporation as their trustee, but I am available to support all our Fellowship churches. My role complements and sits alongside the spiritual support of our Ministry Director Tom Brand, the team of Ministry Coordinators and the work of our Operations Manager Paul Walker and the EFCC Office, while I directly link into our Trust Board and Committee.

Ronald Ragan famously said in 1986, 'The most terrifying nine words in the English language are, "I'm from the government and am here to help".' As the Trusteeship Coordinator, I get alongside our churches, often with face-to-face visits, and I hope and pray that I don't strike the same terror when I introduce myself with 'I'm the Trusteeship Coordinator and I am here to help'! Helping really is at the heart of the role as each church is a unique expression of Christ's Kingdom. The chal-

allenges of the ministry, leadership, build-ings, finances and many other aspects of church life all differ from church to church, yet there are common issues that I can spearhead and bring to bear the EFCC's experience and expertise.

An important aspect of my role continues to be in helping churches to fulfil their legal obligations. These are often detailed in trust deeds that are in some cases hundreds of years old. Thinking about alternative up-to-date and fit-for-purpose forms of church governance can seem like a minefield and befuddling to all but the sharpest legal minds. However, being able to stand back and look at the big picture of a church's existing trusts as well as being able to explore together what the alternatives might look like and whether they would work in an individual church's unique circumstances has been a real privilege. The EFCC has developed a model Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG) template, and I am available to work through it or an alternative with you, such as a Charitable Incorporated Association (CIO). There is no one size fits all, sometimes no change is the best choice. I want to help you find the best option.

Congregational governance obviously lies at the heart of our grouping, but sometimes it can have fallen by the wayside. This has been particularly so since the trauma of Covid-19. Getting back on track and helping churches make prayerful and God-honouring decisions is another important aspect of my work.

Government regulations can seem particularly burdensome when we feel that we are stretched thin already and yet we recognise that areas such as safeguarding, safety legislation and regulating our

wider interactions with clear agreements are good things. Alongside my Trusteeship Coordinator role, I also act as the EFCC's Designated Safeguarding Lead. This experience has helped me to support several churches in developing or updating local safeguarding policies and practices. This remains an ever-changing and developing field. Preventing abuse remains an obvious safeguarding priority, but the handling of complaints and alleged abuse of authority now seem to be increasingly reported in the wider Christian community. Being up to date with safeguarding is important and, again, I'm here to help.

A quick mention about timescales, throughout this work it is important to recognise that many of these discussions sit alongside the important priority of sharing the Gospel and that EFCC are serving brothers and sisters in Christ. Ultimately, we are all seeking to serve the Lord so while it is important to proceed in a timely manner the overarching principle is to do things well and not to rush.

It continues to be a huge privilege to visit dozens of churches and see the Lord's gracious hand in different contexts. It is hugely encouraging and great comfort to remember that though governance is rightly 'secondary but necessary' scripture makes clear that it is Christ who builds His church.

Should you wish to discuss any of the aspects of church life discussed in this article please do not hesitate to contact me, I would be delighted to explore how I can perhaps help.

**Kevin Davies**

Trusteeship Coordinator and Safeguard Lead

# Financial Statements

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 2023 with the figures for the previous year also included as a comparison. This shows that the costs of running the Fellowship, during 2023, increased by £16,775 to a total of £184,289 compared to £167,514 in 2022. Income for 2023 has subsequently needed to increase to ensure that the increased costs could continue to be met. Income in 2023 was reported at a total of

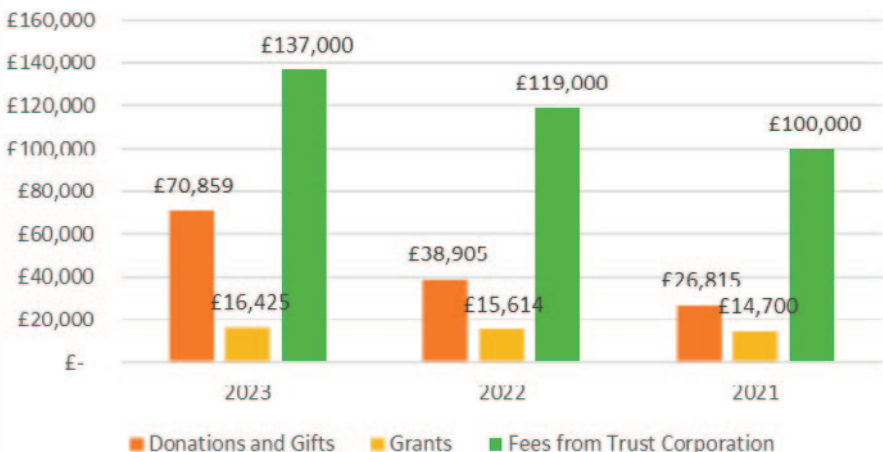
£224,284 a 29% increase compared to 2022.

The total income for 2023 exceeded the total expenditure and as such a net income figure of £40,246 is reported in the financial statements which compares to a net income position in 2022 of £6,023. The 2023 net income position has increased the reserves of the General Purposes fund to £79,692 at 31st December 2023.

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

In the year under review gifts from churches and individuals increased to £70,859 compared to £38,905 in the prior year. While this increase is positive some £40,000 of the increase here is attributable to one legacy received during

### General Purpose Fund - Income Analysis





the year meaning that regular giving stood at approximately £30,000.

Grant income shows a slight increase at £16,425 when compared to £15,614 in the prior year, this being the Memorial Hall Grant received.

Management charges to the Trust Corporation have continued to increase with the total charges in 2023 being £137,000, an increase of £18,000 compared to 2022. The management charges reported are reflective of the funds that have been transferred from the 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 continued to increase and are up by £4,049 when compared with the previous year. This increase can be attributed to increases in General and Regional Secretary costs and

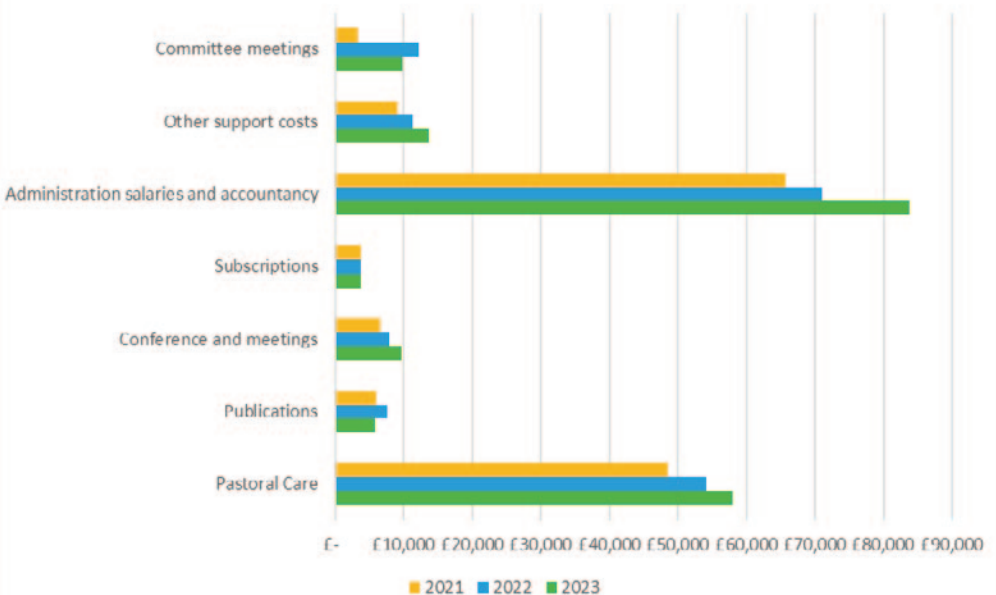
meeting costs offset by reductions in publication costs.

Support costs at £107,099 have also increased compared to 2022. The increase of £12,726 can mainly be attributed to increases in staffing costs as well as general inflation-related cost increases for running the offset. These increases are however offset in some part by a reduction in Committee meeting costs.

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 £80,000. The increased net asset position is largely driven by the large legacy received during 2023 and it therefore continues to be clear that without this the income received from Trust Corp will continue to be crucial to maintaining this position and to enable the Fellowship to continue operating in the current form.

**Luke Taylor**  
Accountant

### General Purpose Fund - Expenditure Analysis





## 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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healthy churches

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