



Annual Reports 2024

Trustees Report

1. Introduction

Together4Bristol ('T4B') is the trading name of *Churches Together in Greater Bristol*, a 'unity for mission' movement across the Bristol region, a member of *Churches Together in England* and a registered charity. It brings together three distinct areas of interest within the Christian community: churches, prayer and the 'whole of life'.

2. This Year

This year has seen us gaining momentum as we continue to be an organisation that is feeding into the vision of building Bristol as a city of hope. Various collaborative partnerships for mission were built across the city. Unlike many other charities our key role is to be the bridge that links various Christian churches and organisations for the purpose of unity in mission. Whilst we support and celebrate the work done by various denominations and respect the differences that exist within our various expressions of faith, we choose to focus on what we have in common and rally around the greatest commandment and the great commission. We are stronger together and are able to achieve much more by working alongside each other.

As trustees this year we focused on relationship building and restructuring our scope so that we can create achievable goals. We realised that we could not propagate a message of unity if we did not know each other so we intentionally had lunch and aimed at just knowing each other. We also brought awareness of the work of T4B in all the key gatherings that we had. These included the quarterly breakfast with the leaders and outgoing Mayor of Bristol. This helped bolster our relationships as well as hearing the pulse of the city to see how churches can continue to meet the felt needs of the people within their spheres of influence. A planning team was set up to see how we can best adapt to the evolving nature of our Christian community so that T4B remains relevant to the current generation that it is serving.

3. Community Mobilisation

We are grateful that we managed to mobilise the Church for a day of city-wide prayer and fasting in response to knife crime and various acts of violence that saw Bristol lose young lives from diverse backgrounds. Churches were made available as centres where people could come and grieve for their lost loved ones and on behalf of the city in general. Various Churches continued to look into the welfare of asylum seekers and refugees from different countries who fled and ended up in various shelters and hotels in Bristol. Through various arms of the Spheres of life many other social

action and prayer activities were executed, and these will be covered in the spheres report. We also celebrated Pentecost together and again here opportunities to network across the city were embraced as we worshipped together and shared refreshments afterwards.

We hosted an annual conference combined with our AGM and this involved one of the leading youth organisations leads who informed the church leaders who were there how to reach out to the younger generation. This was timely because as trustees we had been concerned about baton passing and legacy. We are pleased to have identified some willing young people to join us in our efforts to reach their generation and for unity in mission not just to be for the older generation but also for young people.

4. Accountability

We met with some of the Presidents for relationship building and for the purpose of having them address some of the issues that trustees needed clarity on. The Presidents meeting was held in Knowle West one of the deprived areas of Bristol. This meeting also served as an opportunity to meet up with the leaders of Knowle West, to hear how they have been faring and to encourage them in their unity in mission.

We pray for a greater year ahead and to continue to work together as salt and light to our city and beyond.

Fatima Sibanda (Chair)

Prayer Report

The year started with prayer as we welcomed the new year 2024.

Our stated mission for the year was to enhance the unity among us. The following are the prayer activities T4B was involved in during the year under review.

1. Church Leaders Prayer Breakfasts

These were held three times in the year in January, May and September. The first two were held on online over Zoom while the last one in September we had in person at Hope Chapel.

2. Church Leaders Prayer Meetings

These have continued to held every Thursday morning over zoom from 7am to 8am. This is open to church leaders as well as sphere and ministry leaders within the city.

3. Church Leaders response to Knife crime

The City experienced a number of knife stabbings particularly among our young people so the leaders came up with a response to these stabbings on our streets. It was decided that we hold a prayer meeting in the morning of 6 March as well as the

evening. The morning meeting was held over Zoom and about 200 people were online. In the evening we had an in-person gathering at the Cathedral with about 190 people in attendance to pray for the peace of the city. It was decided that we needed to come up with practical ways with which we can shepherd the city.

4. Pentecost Celebration Gathering

T4B organised a Pentecost celebration at Woodlands Church on 19 May. We had our young people share in organising the event. Over 200 people were in attendance on the day as we celebrated the birth of the Church.

5. Passing on the baton gathering at Hope Chapel

T4B in conjunction with Hope Chapel organised a gathering on 16 July at Hope Chapel to celebrate 25 years of the prayer centre but also to commission young people into their calling to stand in the gap and pray for our city. Over 150 people were invited as the young people were prayed over by the leaders.

6. Bristol Prayer Wall on WhatsApp

We have continued to share prayer requests for the city over the platform and prayers continue to be offered to God on behalf of the city.

7. Prayer during the protests on immigration

T4B in conjunction with Prayer for Easton organised prayer walks as well as going there physically at the site of the protests to pray. We thank God that the protest by the anti-immigration group did not materialise at Old Market.

8. Prayer Walks

These have been carried out on a regular basis by groups of people across the city.
Derick Mulubwa (Vice Chair)

Spheres Report

1. Introduction

a) This has been a very busy year for Together4Bristol (T4B)'s Whole (or Spheres) of Life, as we help transform Bristol from a tale of two cities, to a City of Hope! It has also been a year of rebuilding in a couple of the spheres.

b) Roger Allen is T4B's Spheres Trustee (1½ days a week, voluntary).

c) These spheres are Sport, Health, Education, Family, Politics and Social Action, Arts, Media, and Business and Workplace. This is pioneering work. Below are some

highlights!

2. Politics and Social Action sphere

Politics and Social Action sphere, called Christian Action Bristol (CAB), is led by Andy Street and a steering group. This has been another really encouraging year for CAB, helping the Christian community engage with social action in the Bristol region. Key highlights include:

a) A gathering at St George's in January 2024, for key social action leaders and others from across the city. This included a team from Christian Action Brighton and leaders from Bath and Cardiff. CAB is also building a closer relationship with the Church in Weston-super-Mare.

b) A growing partnership with Good Faith Partnership (GFP) and Noise 365 to find ways of working together to serve and support the city and see Church resources being released in even more effective ways. This has been a particular encouragement.

c) A growing focus on many of the more disadvantaged communities in particular. There are increasing signs of networking, unity and commitment to blessing every part of the city as together we seek to serve.

d) In May, Bristol moved away from the Mayoral model of city leadership, with Marvin Rees stepping down. This was marked by a significant time in the prayer centre at Hope Church, with 25-30 church and other leaders coming together to reflect on what has been achieved over the last 8 years, to thank and bless Marvin and Kirsten, and to pray for even greater things in the future.

e) The political change in May returned to the Committee system, a Green Party led Council and a new Council Leader, Tony Dyer, with whom an excellent relationship has been developed. He fully supports and endorses the work of the Church across the city. Meetings have also been convened with key Council Directors, and very helpful and strategic relationships are being developed. The relationship with the city is as strong as ever, with a sense that the best is yet to come.

f) The relationship with the Bristol Churches City Fund, also continues to develop well. Over recent years the Fund has distributed almost £400,000 to projects all across the city, with a current focus on supporting people impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

g) A couple of other social action initiatives across the Christian community were: The Bristol Churches Shelter, from November 2023 to March 2024, with about 150 volunteers from 20 churches helping 20 guests. And The Noise 2024 (May Bank Holiday), which showed God's love in practical ways, with over 750 volunteers from 46 churches, doing 17 community events and 49 projects. See a video for more details. Noise 365 takes this vision into every day of the year. And GFP has continued to develop the Warm Welcome spaces and Ukrainian hubs across the city.

h) CAB can be engaged with through YouTube, through the CAB website and social media (with a Facebook page with over 600 followers, X with about 650 and Instagram with 990).

3. Arts sphere

Arts sphere, or Kingdom Creatives (KiC), facilitated by Malcolm Bourne, has flourished over the last year, linked to about 350 creatives. KiC has established a working partnership with Joseph Studios which includes having access to its creative work / exhibition spaces. KiC meets weekly via Zoom to pray and listen to God, and once a fortnight welcome other creatives to receive personal prayer and encouragement. The KiC Core Team continue to offer mentoring and coaching to those working in the creative industry based in the UK and Europe. In April we had an interactive and exhibition event for creatives and users of Joseph Studios. KiC members have taken part in a wide variety of creative projects across the region (see their map).

4. Media sphere

Media sphere has engaged more closely with the Arts sphere (especially Erica Bebb) and Christians in Media, with a first Bristol Media Hub gathering. A growing core group has met regularly on Zoom, including to plan, with Wonderborn, a gathering at the Watershed in November.

5. Business and Workplace sphere

Business and Workplace sphere, facilitated by Richard Higginson, has met by Zoom three times in the last year. The meeting aims to facilitate good communication and effective collaboration between organisations involved in faith and work / business ministry in the Bristol region. Leadership has now devolved to the Trustees of the Upper Reaches barge, where a group meets weekly to pray for business in the Bristol area. Richard Higginson, the former Director and Chair of Faith in Business, has now moved to Bristol and become a Trustee, joining Victor Tettmar, Ryan Munn and Simon Hockett. With the help of Andy Street, there was a breakfast meeting in June bringing together business leaders on Upper Reaches for fellowship and mutual support; there will be a follow-up meeting in November. Mal Shaw of Transform Work continues to facilitate about 30 Christian Workplace Groups in the Bristol region. Richard and Lois Evans (Bristol Chaplaincy) connect with over 90 chaplains.

6. Education sphere

Education sphere, facilitated by Jane Gillis and Roger Allen, works closely with Bristol Schools Connection and other organisations, encouraging Christians' to 'be and do church' in our school communities. A group from the sphere meets regularly to pray for a growing number of Christians involved in Education across Bristol. Prayerfully encouraging these Christians in their God given work roles is a key focus. The sphere worked with CAB and helps churches connect with Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) to provide mentors in deprived schools (about 8 so far) and with the Family Sphere, promoting the work of Kids Matter in a school community context.

7. Family sphere

Family sphere (called Love Family) is co-facilitated by Sarah Abell and Stu Dendy.

Love Family is inspired by all things family and our heart is to support, encourage and pray for all those involved in working or supporting marriages, parents and families in our city (or who want to be). As a sphere, we pray regularly together via Zoom, on the last Mondays of the month at 8am. We also have an in-person time of prayer each term. We are pleased to be partnered with Parent Buddies, Kids Matter, Mullers, Safe Families, Boing!, Care for the Family, The Marriage Course, The Relationships Academy (Sarah Abell) and Home for Good (Stu Dendy). We desire to grow this network, and are prayerfully considering hosting a Love Family gathering in the next year.

8. Health sphere

Health sphere , co-facilitated by Clare Fleming and Sheena Tranter. There is a weekly prayer hour, seeking Jesus’ wisdom for releasing healing and deliverance across this region. Bristol Healing Rooms (BHR) offer prayer most weeks in-person or online and many have been healed and delivered. See here about BHR and Wildfire healing sessions. There were 6 retreats and a conference on healing, deliverance, prophecy and worship. Teams helped at several overseas conferences. Podcasts have led to people coming for deliverance from across the country. BRI & Southmead hospitals and some community settings have Christian Workplace Groups or prayer groups. There are close links between the Health and creative Arts spheres.

9. Sport sphere

Sport sphere, co-facilitated by Akeel Yousaf and Grant Sheppard, connects several Sport charities across Bristol and Bath, such as World Sport Ministries, Christians in Sport and Christian Surfers and Skaters. Occasional prayer gatherings, such as in the summer, link more widely, for example with the chaplains involved with Bristol Sport.

Roger Allen

Together4Bristol

T4B connects with the Gather Movement, which links about 150 “unity for mission movements” in the UK. Roger, with Andy Street and Sheena Tranter, are part of the wider team. Roger took a small group from Bristol to the Gather Summit in June. He was asked to write about The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Spheres Work in Bristol, to help other places. A small group (linked to LICC) continued to help church leaders and the spheres work more closely to release everyday Christians in the whole of life. Mark Greene (LICC) is due to speak at T4B’s Annual Celebration in November. Also, Roger taught the Reframe course, with a small group, as a pilot scheme.

The T4B website is updated by Adam Hudson, including events, articles, jobs and volunteering opportunities connected to the spheres. Each sphere has its own page on the website. T4B’s monthly enewsletter is sent to over 1,700 people; we also have over 1,000 members on the Facebook group, about 570 followers on X (updated by Philip Nott) and a growing number on Instagram (updated by Lucy Burden).

1. Governance

There were no serious incidents in this financial period.

We raised funds from the public, but did not work with any professional fundraisers or commercial participators.

We did not make any grants, and had no income from contracts with central government or local authorities, or from outside the UK. We did not operate outside England and Wales and have no subsidiaries.

None of our trustees received any remuneration, payments or benefits from the charity other than refunds of legitimate trustee expenses, and none of them took up employment with the charity.

None of our staff received total employee benefits of £60,000 or more; the total value of employee benefits paid to our highest paid member of staff in 2023 was £6,120.48.

Excluding the trustees, the charity had around 50 volunteers during the financial period, most of them working within the various Spheres; another 20 people were volunteers for Local Friends.

The charity last reviewed its internal financial controls and approved an updated Financial Policy in November 2023.

2. Keyboard

It was agreed towards the end of 2023 that the work of the Keyboard Group should be progressed through the regular Enabling Group meetings, so unless a specific need arises no more meetings of the group would be arranged. This decision was in line with the general movement to integrate the Keyboard work with the mainstream T4B activity.

3. Local Friends

Local Friends is a T4B project led by Paul Hazelden, which supports social prescribing in the Bristol Area. Local Friends has a group of around 20 people who have offered to help as volunteers, many drawn from local churches, who provide a variety of support for lonely and isolated people in the communities around Sea Mills and Stoke Bishop. There have been fewer calls for their support in the past year, and only around 5 volunteers were actively supporting people.

4. Finance

The “100 Friends Appeal” has now raised over £2k towards its target of £5k, for the website and social media to become financially sustainable.

We have completed the process of closing the M&G account, which was set up to hold the Keyboard funds and was being managed on our behalf by the URC: this should make the accounts slightly simpler in future years.

We also have a PayPal account, which is used to enable people to donate to our work via the web site. There has been a small balance in this account for several years which, for a while, we have been unable to access. Happily, we have now regained access to the PayPal account and transferred the balance to our bank account.

Most of our income arrives, variously described as ‘donations’ or ‘membership fees’ from our members; other income includes contributions made towards the cost of running our various activities.

5. People

In normal circumstances, the T4B Enabler of Mission and Unity (EMU) is recognised by *Churches Together in England* as their County Ecumenical Officer; in the absence of an EMU, Paul Hazelden is the temporary County Ecumenical Officer.

One of the most significant aspects of the past year was the decision to postpone the appointment of a new Enabler of Mission and Unity (EMU) after Ian Taylor stood down from the post due to ill health early in 2023.

Two major factors fed into this decision. Ian’s departure happened at almost the same time that Carmen Carroll’s role as the Keyboard Worker came to an end because there were insufficient funds to employ her for another year. We were determined that the Keyboard work, promoting racial unity within the church, should continue. And, while Carmen’s activity among the BME-led churches had been valuable, it seemed on reflection that the goal of racial unity will not be best served in the future by appointing one person to promote unity among the churches and a different person to promote unity among the BME-led churches. It was considered preferable to find one person to promote unity among all the churches, while making racial unity a major focus of their work.

This decision came about at the same time as we were considering a wider reassessment of the role and job description of the EMU: the context in which we are operating has changed significantly over the past ten years, and it was considered to be timely to take a step back and consider what the purpose and priorities of the role should be – a task which is much easier when nobody is actually in the role, so you are not implicitly questioning whether they are doing the right job.

We also need to take into account the fact that, at the 2025 AGM, Roger Allen is planning to step back from providing active support to the Spheres – a role which he has been filling on a voluntary basis for some years. So we also need to provide support to the Spheres activity, and this must feed into the discussion concerning the EMU job description.

Roger Allen and Paul Hazelden