

Diverse Church

Report of the Trustees For the year ended 31 December 2022

The trustees present their report, which covers the period from 1 January 2022 to the year end 31 December 2022, together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2022. The trustees have prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis as the total income of the charity is less than the SORP threshold for the year, in line with Charity Commission guidance, CC15d November 2016.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Charity number

1179441

Correspondence Address

6 St. Martin's Place
London
WC2N 4JH

Trustees

Revd Dr S.M. Wells (Chair)
R. C. Kehoe
A.J. Irwin
P.S. Counsell
V. Taylor-Blackford
K. Allen
M. Kenny (resigned 27/01/22)
A. Tooms (appointed 06/09/22)
S. Brooke (appointed 06/09/22)

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, the Constitution, and is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO - Foundation) and was registered with the Charities Commission on 3 August 2018.

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

The trustees of the charity are responsible for the leadership and management of the charity to fulfil the objects of the charity in line with Christian principles and legal requirements. Appointment of additional trustees is the responsibility of the existing trustees.

Risk management

The trustees have a duty to identify and review the risks to which the charity is exposed and to ensure appropriate controls are in place to provide reasonable assurance against fraud and error.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Diverse Church was founded in 2013 by Revd Sally Hitchiner, who over the next several years established and developed the organisation, and served as our first National Director. Diverse

Church was established and exists to foster Christian communities across the United Kingdom and Ireland that enable young LGBTQIA+ people to celebrate their identity and flourish in faith. These communities provide a safe space for LGBTQIA+ Christians to share their experience of their sexuality, to discuss the interrelation of their sexuality and Christian theology, and to support each other. Diverse Church also supports young LGBTQIA+ people for whom faith has been a particularly challenging part of their lives and experiences, who may no longer identify with faith as a result.

The objects of the Church are for the benefit of the public, and are

The advancement of the Christian faith, in particular, but not exclusively, among lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, asexual and intersex Christians, through the provision of pastoral support, theological discussion and other activities as the trustees from time to time think fit.

In accordance with its aims, Diverse Church has planned and delivered a range of support and activities throughout the year. This support and the activities were planned with due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and in particular, the specific guidance on charities for the advancement of religion.

Diverse Church participants become part of online cohorts using a closed Facebook group, and create communities of 50-100 members. Once this size is reached, then a new community cohort is planted. Given the situations many of the young LGBTQIA+ people who join Diverse Church have experienced, the welcome into the group is especially important. The beauty and importance of this welcoming process where people, who have often been very isolated, are able to talk to somebody supportive who will listen, potentially even for the first time, cannot be underestimated. It is easy to forget just how powerful and important this is, but a beautiful quote from one of the members sums it up perfectly:

So I'm sure most, if not all, of us have struggled with the idea that we had to choose either our sexual identity or our faith/religion. But being here, it's so comforting and reassuring to have a place/group where both (y)our faith and sexuality can coexist without having to choose one, or be more one way than the other.

Once each cohort is established and functioning there are regular online meetups and discussions for encouragement and support, with communication and support from the Diverse Church leaders and local and national physical meet ups arranged, as an additional layer of development. These online meetups and discussions and physical meetups include teaching, thematic workshops, encouragement and collective acts of worship.

Aims and purposes

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that Diverse Church fulfils its charitable aims, which are to advance the Christian faith, in particular, but not exclusively, among lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, asexual and intersex Christians, through the provision of pastoral support, theological discussion and other activities.

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Charitable activities and review of the year

Diverse Church is open to all LGBTQIA+ young adults, with a faith or of no faith, to provide support, and encouragement at what can be very difficult parts of the individual's journey.

During 2022, Diverse Church supported members, parents and carers, friends and wider communities such as schools, youth organisations, community groups and faith-based groups in a range of ways, including peer support groups, training, workshops, mentoring, reflections and social events. A total of 260 LGBTQ+ young adults, 199 parents and carers, 170 school pupils aged 12 –

16 years old, 134 educative staff, 10 young people aged 16 – 18 years old, 52 faith leaders and 63 community participants have been supported by DC throughout 2022.

Many young people continue to join DC, finding community which helps them breathe, think, feel, connect and be themselves. With many LGBTQIA+ people already experiencing oppression and discrimination in their family units, workplaces, hometowns and faith groups, the impact of the trauma related to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns have been disproportionately painful for many people involved in DC communities and the impact of this continues to be tangibly felt. The need for such safe, brave and inclusive spaces continues. DC takes a blended approach to provision of support and services, with a mixture of online and in person programmes, always prioritising the needs and wellbeing of the communities. In the words of a DC member, "DC for me has become a place of sanctuary. There was a real community of people where I could discuss things I was going through - the struggles and complications of coming out to people, and I could embrace my identity."

As well as facilitated workshops and sessions lead primarily by the DC Director, DC members themselves have taken opportunities to contribute both within the DC communities and more publicly through DC's platforms. Members have generously shared their stories, offered activities for the wider groups using their skill sets, provided advice and information, mentored, written poems or songs, prayed, campaigned, networked and collaborated. Special events were held throughout the year, often linking with significant calendar dates for LGBTQIA+ people. The willingness of DC members to open their minds, hearts and lives has sustained communities that truly feel connected, as well as resourcing the public and wider society to become more mindful and inclusive in their own communities and lives.

Suggestions and feedback from DC members have been formative in shaping the purpose and work of the charity, and how the communities function. It is important to us in DC to be needs-led, solution-focused, trauma-informed and inclusive in all that we do. The voices, ideas and lived-experience expertise of members are very significant parts of the journey towards truly achieving this.

The final words go to DC members themselves, who summarise the impact of being part of these communities:

"To have this group with all of you is a chance to breathe. I can just be, and I don't have to defend my right to exist. Sometimes I get really tired, but I find I can rest with you."

"I remember the first time that I was quoted on DC social media platforms and I felt scared to even have the initial of my first name printed. Now I am fully out, and happy to have my full name printed. This community has been such a huge part of my journey towards embracing my whole self and sharing that with the world."

Staff and Volunteers

All areas of Diverse Church are staffed by volunteers who freely give their time and skills, and without whom the charity could not function. The volunteer National Director leads the direction and pastoral care of Diverse Church.

During the year all policies and procedures are reviewed (and updated where appropriate). The Safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and kept current in line with expert advice.

Connections

Diverse Church has connections with other charities and organisations, particularly those with a Christian connection and / or those with an LGBTQ+ support or advocacy focus. During the year the National Director and other Diverse Church members were invited to deliver training and facilitate workshops to other organisations on behalf of Diverse Church. These have included YMCA Ireland, Corrymeela, various faith-based organisations, youth groups and schools.

Following the success of previous partnership events, Diverse Church continues to collaborate well with other organisations, including One Body One Faith, Two:23, House of Rainbow, Open Table and Quest. It is beneficial to all of these organisations, and to those each organisation supports, for such effective partnerships to be flourishing.

Diverse Church has been able to provide pastoral, emotional and practical support to young LGBTQIA+ people throughout the year. In all these areas the Trustees are grateful to God for direction and provision, and wish to record their thanks to all the volunteers and participants who have sacrificially given of their time and finance to support and to equip both the Diverse Church cohorts and groups, together with the wider community. As these connections and opportunities to support young LGBTQIA+ people continue to increase, it has been very encouraging to that Diverse Church secured grant funding from Benefact Trust for two years. This has significantly supported the essential, life-giving work of DC and continues to do so.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Finances

As all activities of Diverse Church have generally been carried out by volunteers, fundraising was not previously considered necessary. However, as Diverse Church has grown in both numbers and opportunity, it has become clear that to continue to support the community well, to increase the effectiveness and the reach of Diverse Church and to fulfil the charitable aims, it would be advantageous to be able to fund the release of specialist resources, ultimately leading to the National Director role becoming a full-time remunerated post.

Benefact Trust (Previously All Churches Trust) awarding Diverse Church a total of £20,000 per year for 2022 and 2023. The first payment was received in early 2022.

Ongoing fundraising and funding opportunities continue to be a priority for DC to build upon the vital support we provide, and to grow towards sustainability for the future.

Reserves policy

The Charity has a Reserves Policy that identifies a prudent level of reserves, based on holding an amount equal to circa six months operating costs. This is always under regular review and will be updated as fundraising activities allow the implementation of the strategy for establishing remunerated key posts within Diverse Church.

Approved by order of the board of Trustees on 21 September 2023, and signed on its behalf by

..... Revd Dr S.M. B. Wells - Chair of Trustees



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
DIVERSE CHURCH

No (if any)
1179441

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period
from

Period start date
1/1/22

To

Period end date
31/12/22

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Voluntary Receipts	3,022	-	-	3,022	12,290
Grant Funding	20,000	-	-	20,000	-
Charitable Activities	545	-	-	545	300
Gift Aid	- 0	-	-	-	718
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
Sub total(Gross income for AR)	23,567	-	-	23,567	13,308
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Sub total	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Total receipts	23,567	- 0	- 0	23,567	13,308
A3 Payments					
Cost of Charitable Activities	15,787	-	-	15,787	940
Governance Costs	787	-	-	787	35
Fundraising Costs	- 0	-	-	-	3,150
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
	- 0	-	-	-	-
Sub total	16,574	-	-	16,574	4,125
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	
	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Sub total	- 0	- 0	- 0	-	- 0
Total payments	16,574	- 0	- 0	16,574	4,125
Net of receipts/(payments)	6,993	-	-	6,993	9,183
A5 Transfers between funds	- 0	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	13,808	-	-	13,808	4,625
Cash funds this year end	20,801	-	-	20,801	13,808

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
		to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank Current Account	20,801	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Total cash funds	20,801	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds
	Details	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name		Date of approval