Oak Community Church annual report to the charity commission 2019-20

The Oak Community Church has continued steadily to work towards our mission to “Impact our community with God’s love”. This has been seen not only in the regular week-to-week life of the Church but also through how we have worked with other churches, missionaries, and partner agencies across the year. The church is in a healthy position both in terms of its spiritual life and growth of those who gather at The Oak and in its fiscal health.

## The work of the church through week-to-week activities

The church gathers each week for worship, fellowship and preaching. A number of regular attendees form the core of the church with a slow but steady growth of those visiting the church and returning on a regular basis. Weekly attendance averages around 50-70 people each week. These Sunday services also provide facilities for creche and primary school age children to be catered for. The primary mid-week activities for those within the church focuses around prayer on both Tuesday evening and Friday mornings. A small but regular group of individuals attend these meetings and find them spiritually uplifting and encouraging. A wide cross section of the local community is represented with people of diverse races, social class and ages regularly attending and calling the Oak Community Church their home.

Services at the Oak Community Church include not only teaching based on the Bible, but also a wide variety of worship styles with an opportunity in most services for anyone who is following Jesus to bring a word of prayer, move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as to participate in the usual way of singing and rejoicing. The church continues to maintain a warm family culture with deep friendships while also being inviting to visitors and new members.

This year the church was able to celebrate the marriage of a few couples in the congregation as well as baptise new believers. During the final quarter of the year the church started to trial the use of live streaming of services to support those who could not physically attend the meetings. This assisted in preparing the church for adapting services to accommodate government restrictions due to the global Coronavirus pandemic that impacted the church at the close of this reporting year.

## Twenty-year anniversary

This year the Oak Community Church celebrated its 20-year anniversary since moving to our current building and changing name from Orpington Christian Fellowship. The church marked this occasion by holding a vision meeting outlining the vision for the church and our plans for the future, a lunch together with a wide variety of cultural food represented and an open-air service in the grounds of the church which we invited our neighbours to join us for. We also used this occasion to hold the Annual General Meeting for the church with the normal voting and signing off accounts for the previous year.

## Developing leadership

Several investments were made this year in building the leadership capacity and capabilities within the church. The ‘preparing to preach’ course continued to invest time and training in new and potential preachers within the church. The existing leadership team along with those identified with leadership potential joined together with other local churches for the Global Leadership Summit hosted at the nearby Kings Church. Also, the leadership team spent the weekend in Southampton joining the Pioneer Network for their annual leaders’ conference. All these efforts received good feedback from those involved and we are starting to see the return on this investment with new preachers arising, new leaders taking on responsibilities and deeper connections being made with other leaders from other churches and networks.

## Community work

The church’s parent and toddler group, Little Acorns, for local families continued to meet with up to twenty children and their parents coming regularly throughout the school year. After running this community activity for over 17 years we took the difficult decision to close this group in February 2020. The regular users of this group were kept updated on this decision and advised on several other local groups that could support them throughout the week. This was proven to be the right decision considering the COVID-19 restrictions that followed would have prevented the group meeting throughout most of 2020 in any eventuality. Contact is maintained with some of the parents through a Facebook social network group.

The “John 3:16 fund” operated by the church to meet the needs of local people has continued to be supported by generous donations. In turn this enabled the purchase of white goods and paid for other needs of people in the local area who had not the means to buy such things themselves. These were sensitively vetted by the leaders after people had responded to invitations to apply for assistance. Over £1,500 of support was provided this year through items purchased for those in need.

## Use of the Church Building

The church continues to see the building that we own as an asset that can and should be used to benefit our local community through partnering with other organisations and community groups. The collaborative efforts between the Oak Community Church and the Bromley Borough Foodbank remain strong. The Foodbank continued to use the building and on-site storage rent free, with electricity and gas paid for by the church. The Foodbank used the building three days a week for five hours a day. This is in fulfilment of the church’s aim to help with the relief of poverty and to ensure that Bromley Borough Foodbank in the Crays (one of the three poorest wards in Bromley) continued to serve the local community. Over 1600 people came to collect emergency food for three days, and to receive advice on how to escape their crisis, through this outlet over the course of the year. Food hampers were also distributed to almost two hundred over Christmas as well, and Free school meal substitute packages were distributed to families referred to BBF as being in need during the Summer holidays, by local schools and surgeries. Bromley Borough Foodbank is a Trussell Trust affiliated foodbank so also links people to other charities and agencies where appropriate, to enable them to overcome the situation they are in so that the need to return is considerably reduced, and they are enabled to stand on their own two feet in the future.

One evening per week the local branch of ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics) also met in the church. This group support those adults who, as children, had to look after alcoholic or drug dependent parents. This group is run by a local person who was themselves in this situation as a child. It has proved an invaluable support group to local people.

The Coksies Kids Club uses the building to care for children after school for working parents. The church is also now well known in the local community for offering affordable hire rates for children’s parties or non-alcoholic social events in a safe, secure, and comfortable environment. This year the church raised over £3,000 of income from hall hire income.

## Working with other churches and missions

As a small independent church, we value our partnership with other local churches, church networks and para-church ministries. These links with other church communities have continued and strengthened this year.

The Oak Community Church is an active member of Churches Together in the Crays, affiliated to Churches Together in the UK and a member of the Evangelical Alliance of the UK. Some of the leaders also connect with, and find mutual support, through an informal but invaluable relationship with the Pioneer Network.

This Easter the church gathered with other local churches in the Crays for an open-air service in our nearby shopping parade on Good Friday. Over 150 worshipped together and Trevor Hall, our Pastor, preached a message of hope and salvation for local people to hear. In the summer, the Oak Community Church joined “The Turning” mission with churches from across Bromley Borough. This was a week of mission running across many of the London boroughs. Through this mission many people outside the church community responded to the gospel message.

The local Christians Against Poverty (CAP) debt centre manager spoke at one of our Sunday services to outline how the Oak is supporting the work of CAP and invited others to join as befrienders in this much needed area of our community. The church hosted a two-week CAP money management course which saw church members and those outside the church join for this course.

The church also supports several international missionary charities, and two former members of the congregation are strongly involved in running an orphanage in Mozambique. The church also makes donations to other local Christian charities.

## Operating the Charity

A legal agreement was established in the previous year, 2018-19 to transfer assets from the old charity to a new CIO of the same name. Plans are in hand to close the old charity, but further administration is required before this can take place. This primarily focuses on setting up the new CIO charity for claiming Gift Aid with HMRC. There are trustees in common across both charities. This report represents an account of activities for the Oak Community Church whether referred to by Oak Community Church Charity 1086478 or the Oak Community Church CIO 1174870.

Trustees for the CIO met regularly throughout the period along with the Pastor for the Oak Community Church to ensure effective and efficient coordination between the legal and practical administration of the charity and the strategic and spiritual leadership of the church.

This report has been seen and approved as a record of the church as a charity and now a CIO by the current members and the trustees as of March 2021 namely: -

Vivienne Curtis, Michael Cheney - Oak Community Church Charity 1086478

Vivienne Curtis, Michael Cheney, Samantha Marlow, Wendy May, Vanessa Steven - Oak Community Church CIO 1174870