

An aerial photograph of a city, likely San Francisco, showing a wide river (San Francisco Bay) with a ship sailing. The city skyline is visible in the background, and the foreground shows a dense urban area with various buildings and streets.

2021

**CORNERSTONE
COLLECTIVE**

Annual Report

www.cornerstone-collective.org



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A time to reflect, lament and be thankful



I don't know if this is true for you but when I think about my day-to-day life and how the days and weeks pan out there seems to be a rhythm to it. I'm not saying that my life is like a musical, where there is a song or an instrumental to accompany everything that I do or say (even though I would love to live in a world like that). I'm talking about a beat and rhythm to my day and life that I know, that I expect, that seems to just flow. When I put my head on the pillow, I have an expectation of what tomorrow will bring, whether that's a day of excitement, dread, or boredom as it moves along the rhythm of my life. What's interesting is I've never gone to bed with the expectation that I am going to be hit with something that will turn my world upside and break the rhythm of my routine, my day, my life. It's like I live my life to a rhythm knowing that this could happen (and for some of us this really has) but never really thinking that it will.

18 months ago we were all living the rhythm of our lives, living the what we now call "normal" when overnight that rhythm stopped. The reality of the brokenness of the world hit us all together all at once; we had to adapt, change, learn new rhythms, we had to accept a "new normal" and we had no idea what we were doing. The rhythm of our lives as we knew them were completely off beat and for some, would never be the same again. At best, the past 18 months have been frustrating and tedious and at worst it has been heart-breaking for many. This has been the reality of the past 18 months, this is the reality of living in a broken world where we as humans are not invincible but vulnerable, where pain and despair are real, and death is certain. And the response of God's people who know that He is sovereign, who know that He is good, kind, merciful and gracious is to lament. Not to shove it under the carpet, but to bring it to Him, to cry to Him, to ask him and to trust Him.

In the book of Lamentations Jeremiah is crying out to God, over the destruction and captivity of Jerusalem and the exile of God's people. It's an honest, raw, painful lament about the reality of life; just listen to him in Chapter 3:16-20 - He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD." Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me.

Jeremiah is saying I've got nothing left, I'm hopeless and even my hope in God has gone - the thoughts and memories of what has happened and is happening I can't get out of my mind, they have a grip on my soul and I'm done; the rhythm of life is gone, changed.

Sound familiar?

For some of us this is how we feel, this is what we want to say to God. The past 18 months have left us feeling like there is no hope.

But as you get to the end of chapter 3 of Lamentations you see a different tone. The city has been destroyed, Jeremiah and the people are still in pain, but something has changed:

Lamentations 3:55-58 (ESVUK)

*"I called on your name, O LORD,
from the depths of the pit;*

*you heard my plea, 'Do not close
your ear to my cry for help!'
You came near when I called on you;
you said, 'Do not fear!'
"You have taken up my cause, O Lord;
you have redeemed my life.*

Do you hear the difference? The circumstances are still the same but the tone of his hope towards God is different:

It's like Jeremiah is saying "I called on your name, yes I was in the depths, but you heard me, you came near and comforted me, you told me not to be afraid, you have taken seriously my issue, my concern, my cause and you have redeemed my life, you have saved me".

The question is - What has changed? What has caused this change in perspective?

Or for us specifically in our pain as we reflect over the past 18 months, if Jeremiah's perspective can change, can ours change also and if so how does that happen?

Dear brothers and sisters, can I remind you that his hope that brings a change in perspective, and a new tone doesn't come from a change in circumstances (even though that may be the fruit and outcome) it comes from what you know to be true despite the situation that we have experienced and that is in front of us. Jeremiah says in 3v20 that his soul is continually remembering his affliction and his soul is bowed down - it feels like his soul is melting away.

But it all turns on the first word of 3v21
- "But"

My soul is bowed down, I am rock bottom "*but*" 3v21 - But this I call to mind, and therefore I hope.

The New Living translation of the Bible phrases it like this - in light of all this "*I still dare to hope when I remember this*". What does he remember? What does he call to mind that gives him hope? Jeremiah in his hopelessness is mining down to draw from the very centre of what he believes, what he knows to be true.

Even though this is how I feel, and this is what is happening to me - I dare to hope because what I know about God, I believe to be true.

Jeremiah in this moment steps onto the footbridge of faith holding onto who he believes God to be, and that gives him hope. It's hope that doesn't come from a change in his circumstances but rather hope that comes from what he knows to be true despite the situation he finds himself in.

And what is it he knows to be true? It's that...

*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him." (ESVUK)*





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Our Gospel ambition as a Collective of churches is to preach Christ and plant churches amongst the communities of people in Liverpool and the Wirral. We want the Lord to continue the work in our region that He has begun amongst us.

– **Steve Robinson**

The new tone of hope comes from what he knows to be true, and this hope comes from the rehearsal of truth that is deep in his heart.

As we reflect on the past 18 months let us be reminded that in the midst of the reality of the pain we have experienced, that our hope comes from what we know to be true of God and what we know to be true of His affections and love towards us.

Brothers and sisters, His steadfast love never ceases, His mercies are new every morning and He is enough, so we are able to wait on Him and trust Him.

And it's this true hope that gives us clear perspective even in the fog of our circumstances, and my hope, as you read this report, is that the truth of God's steadfast love, faithfulness and provision will stir anew the hope of

Christ in your hearts as you read about what He has been doing in us and through us during these unprecedented and turbulent times.

We need to reflect on this time correctly and that means lamenting, but lament is not a category outside of praise, so let us praise with renewed hope as we rejoice with one another across the Collective.

We have a Father whose rhythm has not changed, despite all that we have experienced, and despite the fact that our rhythm is all over the place. He has remained steadfast, He has remained faithful and He is working His purpose for our good and His glory. I hope and pray you will see this as you read on.

Enjoy and Rejoice

– **Steve Robinson**

Director of Cornerstone Collective

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His steadfast love never ceases, His mercies are new every morning and He is enough, so we are able to wait on Him and trust Him.

Hope Church Kensington

George Osborn

We officially launched Hope Church Kensington on Easter Sunday 2021. We started with 14 adults and 4 children as a team from Cornerstone Church Liverpool, and amid lockdown and Covid-19 restrictions, we marvel that God planted a church in the middle of a pandemic.

It's incredible now to look back even just a few months and see all that God has been doing in that time;

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Our hope for the season ahead is that we would begin to engage more with those around us in our community; and to step into intentional gospel mission.



we have seen an average of around 22 adults coming along on a Sunday and 10 children, with our newest addition only born a couple of weeks ago to join the Osborn family. Saying all that makes it sound as if church planting is all about numbers, and whilst we want to celebrate seeing some numerical growth, we also want to celebrate what Jesus has been doing in us as a team; we have each grown so much over these last months, and we are all growing deeper in love with Christ and each other. The bonds between us have been such a blessing, and it is still incredible to me to see people sell their homes, upend their lives and those of their families and futures, in sacrifice so that the people of Kenny can see Jesus and experience him.

We were very excited to baptise two people these past months who clearly have encountered Jesus and been changed by him; to see them testify to His saving work in their lives is humbling. One of

them is currently reaching out in prison and seeing people there engage with the gospel!

This coming term Josh Veale, whom many of you will know, is beginning Crosslands Seminary and having done the course myself I know it will be a blessing to us at Hope Church, as well as it enabling Josh to grow in his gifting, equipping him for the future. Nat Kay is going to be interning with us this year, and comes on board at a time when it will really benefit us to have more hands on the deck to serve the church and the people of Kenny; do be praying for these men to grow in their love of the gospel and God's people.

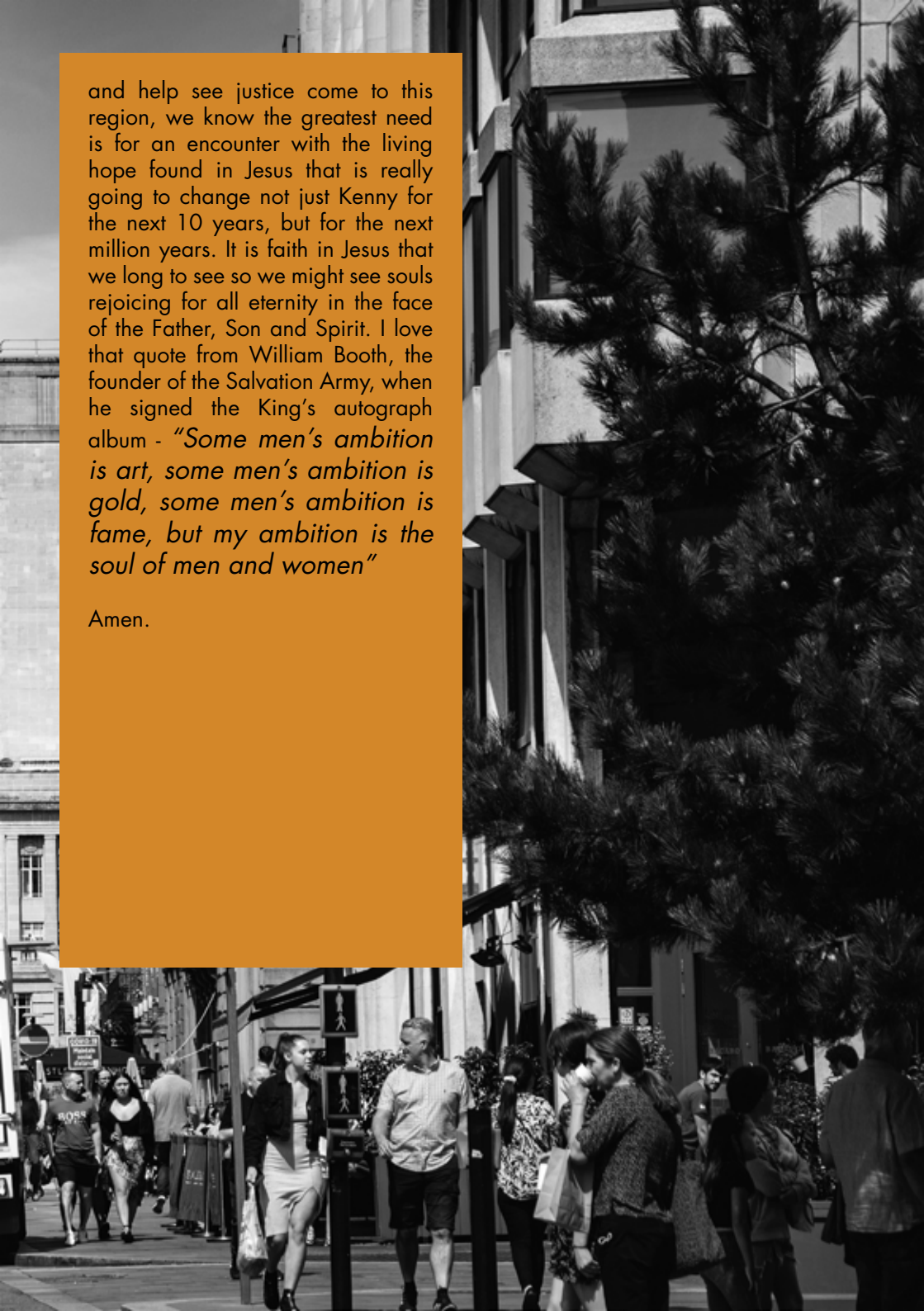
Our hope for the season ahead is that we would begin to engage more with those around us in our community; to step into intentional gospel mission as we look at projects beginning such as community gardens, parents' coffee mornings, gospel communities multiplying and reaching neighbourhoods.

Please pray for wisdom for us, as each Wednesday a couple of us venture into the area to engage with people, meet shop owners, and visit homes, that the Spirit would show us where He wants us to focus our energy and time. We know it's not about coming up with programmes, but about open lives that have Jesus at the centre, where opportunities to talk about him and display him naturally come; do pray that we wouldn't become sidetracked. There are so many needs in this area with many residents falling into the bottom 1% of poverty in the whole of England, and whilst we want to meet physical needs



and help see justice come to this region, we know the greatest need is for an encounter with the living hope found in Jesus that is really going to change not just Kenny for the next 10 years, but for the next million years. It is faith in Jesus that we long to see so we might see souls rejoicing for all eternity in the face of the Father, Son and Spirit. I love that quote from William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, when he signed the King's autograph album - *"Some men's ambition is art, some men's ambition is gold, some men's ambition is fame, but my ambition is the soul of men and women"*

Amen.



Liberti Church Lark Lane

Neil Forsythe

Much like all of us, this last year has been challenging for Liberti Church. The pandemic has resulted in a lot of uncertainty for the day to day functioning of the church and for the lives of our members. However, despite many days of struggle, we're able to look

back and see how God has been maturing us, shaping us, and deepening our roots here throughout it all.

During the end of the last year, we moved from our usual Sunday morning gathering space at 'Nonno's' restaurant on Lark Lane to their sister restaurant Maranto's just over road. Whilst it has provided us a bigger space, ideal for social distancing, our ministry on Sunday mornings and through the week is limited, rushed and much less impactful than what we'd want. If you know Lark Lane, the opportunities for a gathering space for a growing church to gather (particularly in the afternoon which is where we would have most impact), are slim and all the limited options available had been closed to us.



And so, at the start of this year we had our usual week of prayer, and although it was a bit different being held on Zoom, we dedicated our last night of 24-hours of prayer to crying out to God together for two things. First, for God to save the lost in our community, and second for Him to provide us with a more hospitable, safe, and accessible place for our church to call home. Two things that are impossible for us to do in our own strength and abilities.

Despite the frustrations of our meeting space, God has been doing exciting things within our church family this year. Liberti Church became full members of the church planting network Acts 29 in January, and it's



been a joy and privilege to partner with other churches who are planting churches across the globe. Ryan Mason was commissioned as an Elder in the Spring, a move which has had a significant impact on our leadership

community and the life of our church. Our church membership has grown more over the last 12 months than at any time since we planted and it's been really exciting to see a growth in people from the local community participating in our Gospel Communities and prayer groups.

So where are now? Well, we're in the impossible. We cried out to God, and He answered, in the most surprising way! Since planting in 2018, we've had a wonderful relationship with Hamlet Baptist Church, a church just off the end of Lark Lane and incredibly, during the summer, they reached out to us and have offered us full use of their building for a Sunday afternoon gathering. Exactly what we were praying for! This Autumn sees us move to a 4pm gathering, when Lark Lane is at its busiest, in an accessible, safe, roomy church building which is recognised locally without the frustration of having to rush away at

the end or squeeze the Kids ministry into the corner of a Bar. Together with the possibility of exploring options for using the space through the week, this move is going open up missional opportunities that we've longed for but never been able to do in Lark Lane. God in His kindness has presented this incredible gift to us at just the right time, as He always does.



Pray for Liberti

We're incredibly excited about what lies ahead for us and would love for you to pray with us:

- First, give thanks to God for His gracious provision of new people and a new place
- Pray that we'd settle into our new home and transition well from a morning gathering
- Pray for continued growth and strengthening of our body as we grow our leadership communities and open up training opportunities
- Join us in praying our second big prayer for this year, for salvation of those we love and live with here in Lark Lane.

Cornerstone Liverpool

Paul Elms

This last year and a half has been a surprise to all of us. None of us would have expected what happened over the last year, but as I reflect on what God has been doing, it is amazing to see how much grace there has been, and how much God has been acting. His ways and thoughts are definitely so much higher than ours.

As the pandemic hit and lockdown happened, a lot of people had to quickly adapt: the staff team had to find the best ways to make our services accessible, our musicians had to sing and play with people they weren't in a room with, people were pre-recording notices and interviews over Zoom, and the pastors had to record their sermons using their camera phones! All of this was new to us, but God, by His grace, made sure that His word accomplished what He meant it to.

We started two new Gospel Communities just before lockdown hit. These, alongside our existing groups, had to rapidly transition to meeting each week over Zoom. Our GC leaders did a wonderful job of adapting to this set up; leading bible studies and prayer times online, whilst also making sure the people of the church were noticed, loved, and cared for - including the many people in our groups who are vulnerable and had to isolate.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." – **Isaiah 55:8-9**



In July 2020, we got the keys for Dovedale Baptist Church. Ramilies Road Chapel has been such a blessing over the years, and we celebrate God's amazing grace and faithfulness, displayed there down through the years. Now, we look forward expectantly; excited to see how God will use His people, as we gather in our new premises. Please pray that we would all steward it well, for His glory and purposes.

How amazing it was to finally gather there on Easter Sunday morning 2021, after thirteen months of being unable to congregate in person. Even though it wasn't exactly as we would have wanted or planned it, it was still such a blessing to gather as a family and listen to God's Word being proclaimed and sung.

In January 2021, we had the privilege and blessing of appointing four new Elders. Sam Wingfield, Eddie Taylor,

and Ben Blundell were all brought on to serve in Liverpool, whilst George Osborn was appointed as a 'church planter in residence'. Eddie and Ben were both previously baptised at



Cornerstone, and it is our prayer that God will continue to save and raise up people in our church. Ben has just finished a three-year seminary training course, and is now working full time at Cornerstone. There are also other people who have been trained and equipped for specific ministries: we



have several people going through a two-year counselling course and many of our ladies have been walking through 1 Kings together over the past 6 months. We pray that God would open up opportunities for more people to be trained and equipped for gospel ministry.

On Easter Sunday, we sent out a team of people to start a church in Kensington. George and Kate Osborn had already spent over a year with us at Cornerstone Liverpool, and during that time they had gathered a team of fourteen adults (and four children) to go with them. Over lockdown, the team had all moved into Kensington, and were excited to be able to gather in person once they were allowed. The church have enjoyed the added blessing of two baptisms in the first few months of planting. We will deeply miss all of the team, but it is so exciting to see God using His people to reach Merseyside, through the planting of churches. We pray for much fruit through Hope Church and for God to graciously continue using us to send people to plant churches.

In the summer of 2021, we had the privilege of baptising eight people, each of them with unique stories of how God has brought them from death to life. Five of them came to faith over lockdown - some through watching our online services. Praise God that He can even use the awkwardness of online services to accomplish His will!

Who would have thought we would see and experience so much of God's grace

and blessing through a global pandemic and a national lockdown - God's ways are so much higher than ours! Praise God!

"so shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it"

Cornerstone Liverpool Kids and Youth

Debbie Kieschnik

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." - **Proverbs 22:6**

One day we were serving and teaching our kids and youth beside their parents, face to face. Overnight our services and gatherings adapted to online, within the space of a week.

The rethinking of how to deliver our bible stories, games, crafts, quizzes, even prizes to our kids and young people was a daunting yet massively rewarding task.

On Saturday 28th March 2020, the Kids' Church team and all the Kids, including their parents, gathered on Zoom for our first online Kids' Church. Resources were written and sent out all ready to teach the kids through a screen. This is what the Lord had for us all. We missed the kids dearly, but with a team that love the kids, and love

Jesus more; we spent over a year on Zoom.

Our Kids' Church team have stepped up to many challenges over the past 18 months; I was pregnant and unable to lead them for 4 months, then lockdown hit. Praise God for our team being reliant on Him. We continued with our Bible overview curriculum with the children, and parents doing the crafts and worksheets during the church services on Sunday mornings.

With the older children in our church, adaptations needed to be made to ensure that their ministries continued over the past 18 months. The Bolder team delivered their Monday evening sessions on Zoom. From games and quizzes to tasks and challenges, they came up with creative ways to engage the youth during a difficult period. Most importantly, they kept God's word central, faithfully teaching the Parables of Jesus, as well as sharing their testimonies.

Returning to 'normal' face to face Kids' Church on April 18th 2021, the excitement on our 1st Sunday morning was electric. Being together and worshipping

Jesus alongside a faithful team and eager kids is something I will never forget. Bolder has worked around restrictions and met come rain or shine. They finished the year with a celebration for all the families, including a bit of 'Dad dancing'.

Our kids now know that we live in an uncertain world, things can turn upside down in a day. Our prayer is that they realise they can rely on our Lord's steadfastness, and that they see the importance of the family of God. But most of all that they love, follow and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.



Cornerstone Wirral

Josh Walsh

May this prayer encourage your heart in the goodness of God.

My Father

I don't quite know what to say or how to reflect. March 23rd 2020 was a day that no-one had ever anticipated, expected and certainly didn't know what it would mean. It's the sort of thing you watch in movies or read about in novels but instead it entered our reality. Here we are September 25th 2021 gathered together as your people and what is our response to all that has happened in between? We are singing of your goodness.

Father, I never wanted our medical professionals to learn what frontline medical care in a war time mentality means but in your perfect ways through their physical, mental and emotional turmoil they came to know your goodness, kindness and faithfulness in a way no other means could. Who am I to question your ways or determine the means to accomplish your purposes. I honour those who faithfully reflected Christ in the most horrific circumstances. The educational professionals who had to deliver a whole new way of teaching to students across the region, I honour those who did so as Christ's ambassadors. Lord you kept them faithful! I confess I had taken these for granted. Yet these are the common graces of an all knowing, seeing and powerful father. Lord you are so good!



Father, I never anticipated the pressure and strain created when a house overnight would become a hybrid of a school, office, church, gym, entertainment venue, and restaurant. Nor could I have foreseen how that would produce for some, a great pain of isolation and yet sadly for others it was seen as a utopia. With these two extremes my heart wretched at how to navigate this, but it was you, Father who kept your people. Yes, we had moments of joy over the medium of Zoom but we all knew in the pit of our stomach this wasn't right. Lord, I honour those who persevered in these times, who overlooked their own isolation and pain to sacrificially serve others in such Christ-likeness and with such passion, enthusiasm and creativity. With tears I think of those who

sadly drifted, withdrew and walked away, who didn't see your goodness toward them in this time. Wherever they are bring them back to yourself. Through tears and pain I can sing you are good!

Father, forgive me for ever taking the means of grace of your people for granted and never let me forget what you have taught us in this time. Overnight we lost the gift of gathering as a whole church family, gospel communities, small groups, youth groups, kids church, the gift of socialising and eating together in our homes. Lord I am hurting and lacking from this loss. Yet your goodness was so evident as you raised up so many who could create a way in which your people could receive online regular teaching, singing, kids church, and online youth gatherings, I am so thankful for how you gift your people with exactly what they need. You are so good!

Lord, you know our hearts were weary the longer it went on, so we praise you for the lesson you taught of us of the importance and significance of gathering regularly with your people. You brought to reality your design for us not to be alone but to be an interdependent community. I honour those who sacrificially served into the small hours of the night to prepare videos and services, who juggled the responsibilities of family, work and everything else to help all this happen. You are such a good God!

Father, you know the sadness and grief that each person of the Rooted church plant has experienced as you led us to the right conclusion of bringing them back to Cornerstone Wirral. I want to honour all those who courageously stepped out to be part of it and we especially uphold Dave, Esther and the family as Dave recovers from PTSD trauma which came to the fore during lockdown. We pray for healing for





him and for each person as they continue the mission with Cornerstone Wirral. No pain or sorrow robs me of your goodness but rather reinforces you are the only good one we can trust in!

Father, we bear the wounds and scars of this time, with emotions and experiences we need to bring to the light, with brokenness in our own lives, marriages, relationships that have been strained, would you bring healing, reconciliation and restoration to those you know who need it. We do this knowing how good you are. Yet I am thankful that this time reorientated others back around Christ, realising that which is of most importance and the opportunity to break cycles and build new habits. Who else is good like you?

Father, as I reflect I think why would you do this. Surely the gospel cannot advance? But who am I to question your ways or dictate what it best. You humbled us as we saw people become Christians over this time and they are soon to be baptised in a few weeks. You opened our eyes to ways to connect with our communities with which we now have relationships and see them joining the church which wouldn't have happened

otherwise. You taught us how to pray, lament, fast through grief. You continued to meet our needs through the generosity of your people in financial and practical means. The evidences of your grace are littered across the body - you are such a good, loving and caring Father.

We are grateful for your provision through the generosity of your people and from our partnership with FIEC to be able to release Chris Simons full time growing our staff team to serve your people. You are so good!

I am personally grateful for a church who cares so much for me to grant me a sabbatical and all that you have taught me as a result, may it benefit and build up the body. Thank you that during this time of reflection and reading you led me to ask and now us as a church to ask "What will it take to put the beauty of Christ on display to a watching world?" I long for and pray that you'd grow in Cornerstone Wirral, a gospel culture which displays you and the gospel to the Wirral which would grow your people and draw the lost to yourself. We pray in anticipation of this, knowing you will bring your good purpose to bear because you are a good Father.

Through all of this we approach this new season with renewed hope and clarity of vision. We seek your face for future direction as we live in view of your mercies as living sacrifices.

I love you because you first loved me!

Amen

Church Planting

I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written,

"Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

– Romans 15:20–21

The stark truth and reality of our cultural movement is that we are seeing generations grow up amongst us who have never heard or been told about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To think that we live in a Christian country, to say that we have too many churches already and to imply that we live in a city where people are rejecting the gospel is folly. Obviously, people reject the gospel, but the honest truth is that we are now living and working in a culture, city and country that in the main is not rejecting the gospel, but rather they are oblivious to it because they have never heard it. Most people have never heard the gospel, most people don't know a born again Christian and most people have no grid for Jesus, the Bible, church, eternity, heaven, and hell. That's the reality of our culture today.

Paul's geographical goal of ministry was to get to Spain, his home country, for him this was the end of the world and for him this is where he wanted to take the gospel of Jesus. To his people who had not yet heard or understood it. It was his gospel ambition to preach Christ to those who had not yet heard it in Spain but also to many others on his way.

For years this passage was used as motivation for getting on planes to share the gospel with unknown people groups and tribes across the globe, and that is good and right, but the truth is that we only have to cross the street or get on a bus to find people in the same situation as those on the other side of the world.

Our Gospel ambition as a Collective of churches is to preach Christ and plant churches amongst the communities of people in Liverpool and the Wirral. We want the Lord to continue the work in our region that He has begun amongst us. Let us never take for granted the number of people who have been saved and baptised. Let us never become used to sending teams of people out to live in different areas with the sole aim of reaching that community for Christ. Let us never lose sight of the fact that the place which we call home is desperate for Jesus and desperate for communities of His church to be planted all over it.

A new church

Despite the difficulties of the past 18 months, we rejoice in that we have seen Hope Church, Kensington launched and planted. After 18 months of being part of the Church Planter Residency Programme with Cornerstone Collective, George and Kate, along with a team of people from Cornerstone Church Liverpool, set up home in Kensington and you can read in George's report that God is doing amazing things in and through those guys. For those of you who have been part of one of our churches for a few years you will know that this church plant is a real answer to prayer, as Kensington has been on our hearts for many years.

Church Plant Residency

As well as church planting over the years we have had the privilege of walking with churches (not part of the Collective) through the process of revitalisation. Churches that have come to the realisation that they need help, encouragement, training and leadership. Over the past 12 months we have had an ongoing conversation with the leadership of Orrell Park Baptist Church in the north end of the city. These conversations with Pastor Dave Willis and the leadership there have developed and grown into a partnership that will formally begin in October 2021. This partnership will see Carl Robinson coming onto the staff of Cornerstone Collective as a Church Plant Resident, specifically thinking through church revitalisation

with a view to then becoming part of the leadership of Orrell Park with Dave. The year with us will serve as a time of training, but also strategic reflection and planning for Orrell Park, and the hope is that Carl and Sarah will be able to take a team to work with the folks at Orrell Park Baptist Church towards the end of 2022. This is an exciting partnership, which the Lord has clearly formed, and we can't wait to what He is going to do.

Steve Robinson



How to pray

"If the Lord does not build the house, then we Labour in vain"

We need God to lead, provide, sustain, and bring growth.
So, we need to pray.

Please pray:

- That God will lead, sustain, and bring growth
- That He will provide for Hope Church in their infancy
- That the partnership with Orrell Park Baptist Church will bear Gospel fruit
- That Carl, Sarah, Phoebe, Joel and Caleb will be protected, equipped and encouraged as they train and prepare over the next year
- That God will continue to raise up church planters and teams to be sent
- That God will enable us to train/plant/send and help 20 more church planters and revitalisations in our region by 2030 - Let's call it "20 by 30"

Trustee Update

The trustees of Cornerstone Collective of Churches are the group of people who lead on ensuring the legal responsibilities of the charity are fulfilled effectively and appropriately. The charity exists as an umbrella over all the churches of the Collective, and it is set up to support the running of all of the churches and activities within them. Without the ongoing full commitment of the board of trustees the Cornerstone Collective churches would suffer greatly! The tasks undertaken are not often the most exciting ones (e.g. health and safety legislation, HMRC regulations, Charity Commission reporting etc.) but they are vital to the running of Cornerstone Collective and we are so thankful to the team of trustees who continue to use their gifts and expertise to serve God and His Churches on the board of trustees.

Since we last reported to you all, over the past two years, the Trust has continued to develop and refine the vast array of policies and paperwork required to function the charity and the churches effectively, under the leadership of Matt Newberry as the Chair of Trustees, as well as more recently with Anna Wood stepping in as Operations Director and functioning as a trustee. The past 18 months have been a challenge for the board as a result of the difficulty of meeting in person during the various Covid restrictions to discuss and plan aspects vital to the running of the Collective. They have however risen to the challenges presented,

and have managed to push forward with reviewing necessary updates to all of the Collective's documentation, improving the usage of the accountancy software used by the churches, as well as completing on the purchase of Cornerstone Liverpool's new home and the subsequent sale of Ramilies Road Chapel.

The developments in the churches and the Collective itself have led to an increase in the financial commitments of the Collective, and the Trust has been, and will continue to be, instrumental in monitoring the effective execution of the financial blessings God has provided to us. As we move forward with a bigger staff team in the churches the Trust will continue to hold the churches to account over their budgets and act as a mechanism put in place to ensure the Collective stewards well the finances of the churches.

Furthermore, as the Trust plans for the year ahead, we are seeking to ensure that the board strives to be as effective as possible, in both its contributions to the running of the Collective and its churches, but also in terms of its role as an accountability and governance body. As we submit our report and accounts to the Charity Commission each year, these areas are of critical importance, and we aim to take a 'best practice' approach to all that we do to support the gospel work of churches within the legal parameters in which the charitable body operates.

PRAY FOR THE CORNERSTONE COLLECTIVE TRUSTEES

Please pray for the Trustees over the coming months, with specific reference to the following points:

- Give thanks for the Trustees, both current, past and future members of the board, for their ongoing commitment to the vitally important work they undertake.
 - For unity amongst Trustees in their work as an accountability and governance entity.
 - For appropriate giftings in Trustees to be identified and built up to help the board function in the most efficient and effective way.
 - To never lose sight of the purpose of the role of a Trustee in the context of the Collective – for God's work to be done for His glory.
 - For continued uncompromising integrity in the ways in which the Trustees conduct the 'business' of the Collective.
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Finance Report

Anna Wood

Due to a range of factors, with the most significant being Covid-19, we haven't produced a written financial report update for a couple of years now. When we last reported to you all in this format, we were able to share significant encouragements about the finances of the churches in the Collective, and by God's grace and blessing, we are able to do the same now when we reflect upon recent financial years.

The financial year for the Cornerstone Collective runs from 1 August to 31 July each year, and by way of updating you all, this report focuses on significant points and highlights from 1 August 2019 through to 31 July 2021.

At the start of our 2019 financial year we were in a healthy financial position, with our general income sitting above the level of expenditure in the previous year, as well as significant sums of money having been donated into a new bank account we set up to focus on the funds being raised to purchase and start renovating the new Cornerstone Liverpool building on Dovedale Road. One of the main highlights of 2019 for our churches was the big celebration we held in November to mark the 10th Anniversary of the replant of Ramilies Road Chapel (now Cornerstone Church Liverpool), which was the first step towards the planting of the churches in the Collective. Financially we budgeted well for this celebration weekend, and the costs incurred were comfortably covered in the budget for the year.

During this same period the Elders proposed, and the Trustees agreed, to bring into paid employment (on part-time paid contracts) Debbie Kieschnik as Kid's Church Director and

Michael Baggott as Worship and Communications Director, both based in Cornerstone Liverpool, but providing help and serving in different ways at times across other churches in the Collective. This, along with increasing the paid days for Neil Forsythe as Pastor of Liberti Church, meant that our budget as a Collective needed to increase with a need for increased income to sit alongside this. Our general budget for this year significantly increased at that point in time £268,000 and when we completed the financial year in 2020, we were so thankful to God and the generosity of His people that we had met this budget as an overall organisation.

A further highlight of the year was the plans the Collective team put in place to further establish and expand a formal training programme for prospective church planters. As you will hopefully be aware, one of the main focus areas of the Collective as an organisation is for it to facilitate church planting across the Liverpool City Region, and to further this the Collective team set up a Church Planter Residency. The passion behind this is to allow church planters to spend time with other leaders and Pastors in the Collective, benefiting from training and experience from the team, but to do this can come at significant cost to the church planter

themselves. To address this, we applied for a grant from the FIEC and they generously provided £20,000 to be used to support two church planters on the residency programme in the future. At the very end of the financial year in 2020 Cornerstone Liverpool finally received the keys to the new building for the church on Dovedale Road. It was a long journey getting this completed, but with hard work from Matt Newberry and the support of the Trustees, we were able to officially take ownership on 16 July 2020. This has only been possible because of the incredibly generosity of God and His people in the fundraising appeal back in 2018/19, and to see such fruit of God's faithfulness has been amazing.

This financial report cannot ignore the impact that Covid-19 had on our churches. Shutting down in person operations and suddenly moving fully online in March 2020 was a massive undertaking for all the leaders involved in our churches, and it did carry with it costs to set up the required functionality. We did see some drop off in giving with Sunday offering not being possible, but lowered operational costs as the months went on allowed us to operate within our income levels throughout the periods of restrictions we faced.

Moving into the 2020/2021 year this pattern was to continue, with further fluctuations in costs and income as churches moved between different in person and online settings. We were able to utilise the government furlough scheme (on a mainly part time basis) for a few months at the start of 2021 for a few of the paid staff as our operations were so greatly restricted, and this did enable us to continue to function within our income levels and meet our projected budget of £284,000 at the end of the financial year.

The budget for 2020/2021 was increased from the previous financial year, and this was in part due to the launch of Hope Church Kensington, with George Osborn brought onto staff, bringing with him significant financial support to ensure that the church plant was financially secure. This has been full of encouragements on many levels, including that of its finances, with the church in a position to give back into the operational costs of the Collective already.

Other significant financial events have included success in grant applications across the different churches for a range of reasons, including training, investment in technology for streaming services, renovation of buildings, as well as a very generous grant of £30,000 from the FIEC which has allowed Chris Simons to be employed at Cornerstone Wirral, for the initial period of two years, as a Pastor in Training. He is set to be a significant asset to the staff team and we know he will be a massive blessing to

Cornerstone Wirral.

As we continue to look to the new financial year we have just started, we have exciting plans in place to further God's mission of spreading His Gospel across Merseyside, including a new recruit to the Church Planter Residency as well as investment in our existing churches. Liberty Church are stepping out in faith to pay Neil a full time salary this year; Wirral have taken on Chris with a part-funded role; Hope are continuing to establish themselves in Kensington with new leaders being raised up and Liverpool have major plans emerging for the renovation and restoration of their new building, which will of course have significant costs involved in it. All these aspects, alongside the general day to day functioning of Cornerstone Collective and its churches, mean that we have to say a massive 'thank you' to all of you across our churches who generously donate to allow us to work out God's mission here in Merseyside. We pray that we would continue to use God's wisdom to guide our plans and that our vision for our churches would be from God. We ask that you would join us in this prayer, and that individually you would be prayerful over your commitment to your financial giving to God's church. As we step out in faith and obedience in managing the finances of the Cornerstone Collective of Churches may we hold fast to God's promises and plans for His people and our mission field – He will never fail to provide what we need to complete His works.



