

# the Olive Branch

**Fourteenth Annual Report Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2019**  
**Accounts for Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

**The Olive Branch (Faith in Action)**  
**Registered Charity No: 1116239**  
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## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to support those suffering distress caused by addiction, broken family relationships, poverty and homelessness, and to enable individuals and families to resolve and alleviate their difficulties.

## **Constitution**

The Olive Branch (Faith in Action) exists as a registered charity, under a constitution adopted in August 2006. The objects are:- the relief of poverty, hardship and distress in particular but not exclusively among homeless people and those people affected by debt and substance misuse by the provision of shelter, food, clothing, advice, information, counselling, training and by such other charitable means as the trustees shall, from time to time, determine and the advancement of the Christian faith.

## **How our activities deliver Public Benefit**

The charity carries out its activities in pursuance of its charitable objectives. The trustees consider that the activities, provide benefit to the inhabitants in the towns and villages in the area administered by Lancaster City Council. The charity's support centre provides open access for the disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable, to seek help in the form of budgeting advice, emergency food, internet access, information and ongoing support that relieves poverty and helps them towards improved well-being.

## **Volunteers and Community Support**

The charity provides volunteer opportunities for adults who help with hospitality, befriending and listening to visitors, administration, packing food parcels, cleaning etc. In addition, community support is received from across the area from individuals, who donate non-perishable food directly or via local schools, churches and community groups.

Support is also received from fundraising events, and from individuals giving monetary donations. The charity networks with other community organisations by enabling them to make referrals to The Olive Branch on behalf of their service users who need emergency food. Referrals are received from Probation service, Citizens Advice, Housing Associations, Women's refuge, school welfare officers, Lancashire County Council (Crisis Support Scheme).

### Management

The Management Committee meets monthly and comprises:-

Michael Pidd - Honorary Chair

Barbara Kirby – Hon Secretary

Howard Townshend – Hon Treasurer

Grahame Legg - Trustee

Jonathan Mullen - Trustee

Leslie Mann – Project Manager (Non-voting)

Kerry Stephens Assistant Project Manager (Non-voting)

Members of the charity may elect honorary officers and trustees at the AGM in accordance with the constitution. Honorary Officers hold office for one year and trustees for two. The Management Committee may appoint additional members to serve as co-opted trustees until the next AGM. Honorary Officers and Trustees do not receive remuneration. Members of the Management Committee are also volunteers and are actively engaged in the day to day functions of the charity. We have approximately 32 volunteers (including a voluntary fundraiser) who volunteer from just a few hours per week to 2-3 days.

### Bankers

CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Ave, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4JQ

Kingdom Bank, Ruddington Fields Business Park, Mere Way, Ruddington, Nottingham, NG11 6JS

### Premises

The charity rents ground floor premises, near Lancaster city centre, on a 3 year lease which expires in September 2020. The lease was last renewed in September 2017, with no increase in rent. The premises have the advantage of a convenient location, 2 parking spaces and disabled access.

### Honorary Chair's Report

#### **Isaiah 61, Luke 4 - Setting the captives free**

The Olive Branch (Faith in Action) is a Christ-centred charity supported by the local churches and communities of Lancaster, Morecambe and beyond. Our vision is inspired by Isaiah 61 and by Christ's declaration that he had come "to proclaim good news to the poor... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners." Before we open the doors each day, we spend time praying that the LORD will use us to proclaim good news to the poor... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners. We aim to promote the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of individuals and families.

I took over from Barbara Kirby as Honorary Chair at the 2017/18 AGM held on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Since then, the Management Committee decided to shift the AGM to a date closer to March 31<sup>st</sup>, which is the end of our Financial Year. Hence, this annual report is prepared for the AGM to

be held on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and covers the period from November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Future annual reports will cover the financial year that starts on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

As you will see from our annual statistics, the number of people arriving on our doorstep and needing help goes on increasing. Some of this is due to the punitive Universal Credit regime and some is due to Lancaster's status as a City of Sanctuary. By March 2019 we were providing about 300 food parcels each month, a significant increase of the 200 or so that we were providing 12 months earlier in April 2018.

Over the years we have built up an extensive referral, support and redistribution network. We work in partnership with local churches, voluntary and statutory agencies to alleviate hardship caused by homelessness, addiction, poverty and relationship break-down. Working collaboratively, complex issues can be resolved. The charity is continually exploring new and creative ways to ameliorate the lives of people struggling and in crisis. Recipients of our food parcels were referred by agencies that include Citizens Advice, Global Link, Homeless Action and Inspire. The local authority has established a Food Poverty Working Group and we have attended its meetings so as to share our experience and to learn from other agencies.

We welcome people of different faiths, belief systems and cultures. Lancaster's designation as a City of Sanctuary has brought more referrals for refugees and asylum seekers. When people come in crisis, they find refuge, comfort and a message of hope. Building relationship through hospitality, giving time to listen and valuing the person, creates space for life change and transformation. We recognise the potential in everyone and encourage people to see beyond present circumstances and past failures.

Our service is tailored to individual need and circumstance. We aim to be compassionately responsive, 'going the extra mile' where necessary. We are prepared to give comfort and support over the long term. Since God has been gracious to us, we aim to be gracious to people who need our support

There have been several significant changes this year. Our staff now comprises Leslie Mann and Kerry Stephens. Our gifted and excellent Project Manager, Kath Willis, retired at the end of 2018 after 10 years of faithful and fruitful service. Kath helped to drive the charity forward and we were fortunate to employ Leslie Mann in her place. He was able to start in November 2018, which allowed him to overlap with Kath before she left, so as to minimise any disruption.

As we said in our previous Annual Report, we have clearly outgrown our present premises and took the decision to move to larger premises. We currently have to keep people waiting outside when we are full and we do not have enough space to permit private conversations with our visitors to help them find the best way forward. We also don't have enough space to store food. It would be wonderful to be able to hold 10 days stocks, but we can't – which has the advantage that we have to rely on God!

Taking the decision turned out to be easier than finding somewhere suitable, and we are still on a quest to find the right location. Our current location is ideal, but we need two to three times the space to implement our vision of a hub, in which we would be much more than a food bank, where we and other organisations could have those important confidential conversations with our visitors.

Moving to larger premises will give the charity greater scope and flexibility in serving the community. It will also enable the realisation of earlier aspirations to provide a cafe experience, create space for direct networking with other Christian charities and organisations and to develop a social enterprise project providing training/life skills and to generate income.

Chris Whiffen has served the Charity in many roles over the years and, as we reported last year, felt the time was right to withdraw from his role as Honorary Treasurer and we were pleased to welcome Howard Townshend as his replacement. Though no longer Treasurer, Chris continued as fund-raiser and, as you will see from our financial report, has done an incredible job at securing funds for us. He has now decided it is time to hand over that role, too, though not till the end of the calendar year. We are immensely grateful for Chris's faithful and fruitful service over the years.

We are deeply grateful for the passion and commitment of team members, the loyal support of local churches and people, the generosity of various charitable trusts and above all to our God who has sustained us through every challenge and provided for our every need.

*Michael Pidd, May 2018*

### **Project Manager's Report**

Arriving in the Project Manager role in November, I was pleased to discover a well established organisation with a dedicated and experienced team of volunteers. Much of this was due to Kath's hard work in the role over the previous decade and I am very grateful for the firm foundations she laid. The team has been wonderfully welcoming and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers and trustees as well as our Assistant Project Manager Kerry for their support for me and their dedication to the work of the Olive Branch.

This certainly seems to be a season of new things for the Olive Branch, not least in the scale we are operating at. At the start of 2019 the number of visitors jumped by around 50%, with us giving out an average of around 300 food parcels per month. The work of the Olive Branch has always been more holistic than simply giving out food however, and with a rise in the number of visitors we have also seen a rise in the number and scope of complex issues we have been supporting them with. In response to this growth we are reviewing operating systems and policies, including volunteer induction and training in order to ensure we continue to be able to offer the best service and support we can to our guests.

While the number of visitors we receive represents a huge amount of despair and hardship within our community, there is an enormous amount of hope around the Olive Branch. It is very evident that for many of our guests the sense that someone cares enough to listen to them and help them is at least as important as the practical support they receive. It is especially rewarding to see real transformation in the lives of the people we are supporting. This year we have seen people escape from addiction, take steps to resolve long standing financial difficulties and move from the streets into permanent accommodation. As a Christian organisation, we aim not to 'preach' to our guests,

but we do make it clear that we do what we do because we believe God loves them. This year we have seen people find freedom from the past, acceptance and hope for the future in the love of God.

With increased demand on our service, we are grateful to all those individuals, churches and organisations who have donated food and finance. Donations (some regular via our website) have enabled us to buy extra supplies of food to ensure our shelves were always full. We are so grateful for all of the help we have had and even though stocks have sometimes been low we have never had to turn anybody in need away empty handed. We have established several new donation points around the city and are also now in receipt of surplus food from Co-op in Carnforth. Three very successful Saturday collections have now taken place in Asda and I wish to thank Kerry for organising these as well as all the volunteers who have taken part and of course Asda themselves. Throughout the next year establishing regular supplies of donated food remains a priority. Our Christmas Shoe Box and Easter Egg collections were once again very well supported this year and we also very grateful to JD Gallagher Estate Agents for organising a public collection at Christmas and matching donations themselves.

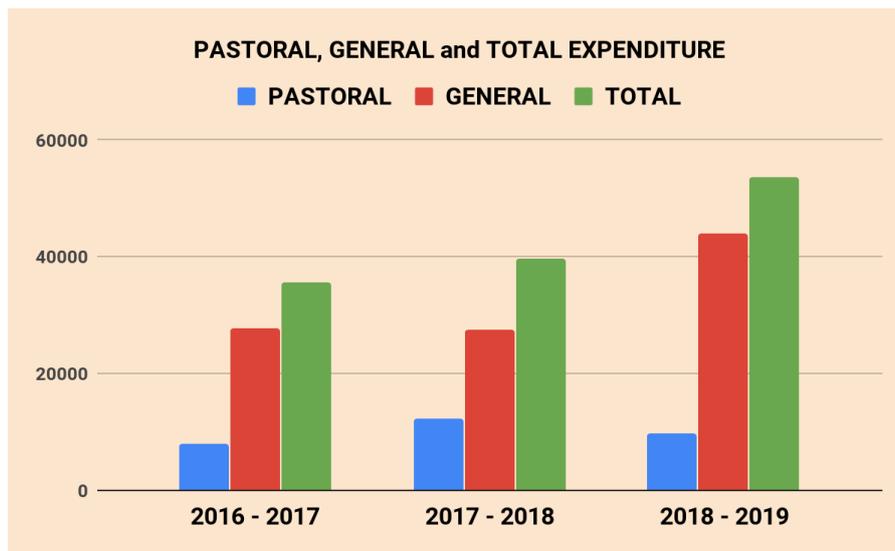


We have a highly dedicated and skilled team of 32 volunteers without whom we could not function. A significant number of these are new to the team and they have fitted in and found their feet very quickly. This includes two volunteers all the way from Brazil who are here as part of the New Wine Discipleship Year program and they have been a great asset to the team.

*Leslie Mann, June 2019*

## Honorary Treasurer's report

### EXPENDITURE.



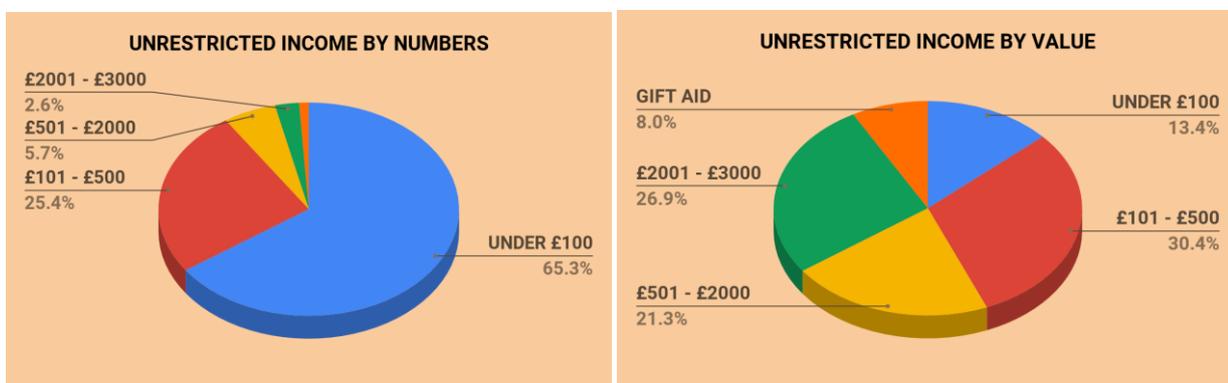
Total expenditure (excluding ACTS 435) increased from £39 718.42 in the previous financial year to £53 677.44 in the year under review, but, the aggregate closing unrestricted and pastoral fund bank & cash balances increased by £13 446.64 to a healthy £43 435.36.

A second part time employee was appointed in May 2018 which accounts for a £10 991.24 rise in employee remuneration. In addition, there was a two month training overlap with the appointment of Kath Willis's replacement following her retirement in December 2018.

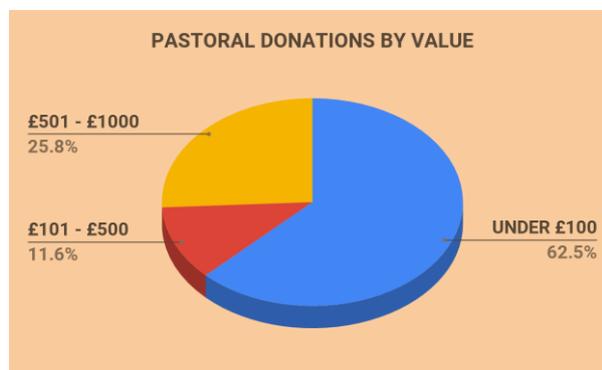
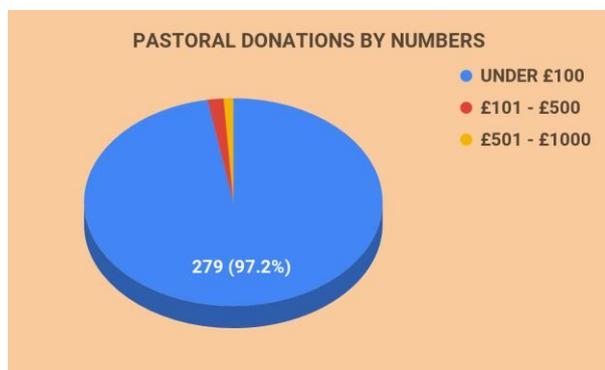
The equipment purchases amounting to £2774.42 for the year were largely funded by two grants. Thank you to Swan Mountain Trust and to Adactus Housing Association

### INCOME.

The philosophy of applying to many for small amounts has been the cornerstone of our volunteer fundraiser's success over many years and has had the additional benefit of minimising the risk associated with chasing a few large grants. Thank you, Chris Whiffen!



Pie charts in respect of pastoral income illustrate even more how we rely upon many small donations by many individuals. 97.2% of pastoral donations were donations of less than £100 each! Thank you to our faithful monthly stop order and PayPal supporters whose donations range from £5 upwards per month. One may think that a donation of £5 is insignificant and does not make a difference, but 12 x £5 equals £60 over a year and £60 does make a difference.



Although the number of food parcels given out increased between the years ending March 2018 and March 2019, the expenditure decreased because of overwhelming food donations, particularly over the 2018 harvest period. We are extremely grateful to the individuals, churches, schools, businesses, and other organisations who were so generous. However, during the first three months of 2019, pastoral expenditure (predominantly food parcel expenditure) reached new highs of approximately £1 200 per month on average. In order not to deplete our pastoral fund balance too quickly, cost cutting measures such as reducing the number of days a food parcel caters for have been implemented. This tugs at the heart but it will be constantly monitored and we will revert to the previous number of days if it becomes possible.

**In keeping with our past practise we acknowledge with gratitude non-individual donors and grantors;**

- Adactus Housing association
- The Alexis Trust
- AVIVA Charities Trust
- Bryan Lancaster Trust
- Comic Relief
- Merseyside
- Jean & Leslie Connor Charitable Foundation
- The Dorcas Trust
- Galbraith Trust
- The Grace Trust
- Joseph Strong Frazer Trust
- LCC Crisis Support
- MEDSOC Panto
- Paphitis Charitable Trust
- Rotary Club Carnforth
- St James's Place Foundation
- Sobell Foundation
- Stobart Newlands Charitable Trust
- Truemark Trust
- William Openshaw Street Charitable Foundation

- Albert Hunt Trust
- Archer Trust
- Barleycorn Trust
- Christadelphian Samaritan Fund
- Community Foundation for Lancashire and
- Cumberland Building Society Charitable Trust
- Fort Foundation
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Greenhall Foundation
- John Mason Family Trust
- Lee Bakirgian Family Trust
- Ogle Christian Trust
- Roger Vere Foundation
- Seedfield Trust
- N Smith Charitable Trust
- Souter Charitable Trust
- Swan Mountain Trust
- United Utilities

Howard Townshend. Honorary Treasurer.

