



Executive Director Report 2023

Connecting 2022 to 2023:

Last year, I reported that:

- **WE CONNECTED** with partners, likeminded organisations, new members, and folks from around the world.

This year, we've built on that by:

- Developing relationships with the UK government, UK Opposition, and key statutory leaders on areas such as safeguarding;
- Remained a vital contributor to the breadth of our partner relationships, leading on key initiatives and coordinating responses to national issues; and
- Continued to support smaller LGBT+ Christian groups in challenging environments beyond the UK, as well as growing existing relationships with key partners including in the United States and Canada.

Last year, I reported that:

- **WE CHAMPIONED** authentic LGBT+ joy and spirituality, a broader safeguarding agenda for LGBT+ Christians, and positive advocacy on contemporary issues.

This year, we've built on that by:

- Expanding our Rhythm offering, wonderfully led by Fr Lee Taylor, to include retreats, and seen a growth in attendance to the weekly prayer meetings - where often ignored LGBT+ poets, authors and theologians are reflected on;
- Establishing our connections across the political spectrum, including the current Government, seeking to enable a better conversation on issues of safeguarding beyond the ban on so-called conversion therapy. This is a growth area potential for us; and
- We've spoken out when needed, spoken alongside when moved to, and are now consistently sought out by leaders from across the traditions and denominations in the UK, as well as statutory and third-sector leaders for our input, wisdom, and strategic advice.

Last year, I reported that:

- **WE COLLABORATED** across resource development, conferences and gatherings, and grant-giving.

This year, we've built on that by:

- Working alongside partners like Just Like Us in the production of a vital resource for schools on faith and LGBT+ issues, due for publication in June, as well as the Student Christian Movement on a jointly produced resource for churches and small groups called: How To Be A Good Christian Ally, due for publication later this year;
- Holding our first offline members' day since prior to the pandemic, spoke at events, re-joined the European Forum of LGBT+ Christian Groups, shared insight on issues such as online hate speech at roundtables hosted by tech



companies like Meta, sat in the role of “critical friend” to leaders in the Living in Love and Faith process and leaders in traditions such as the Baptist Union of Great Britain on their review of policies on inclusion of LGBT+ ministers, continued to champion and support the excellent work of Creating Sanctuary; and

- Using allocated grant funding to support new and established Christians at Pride groups to host a positive and affirming witness of LGBT+ affirmation up and down the country, with a total of 18 groups being supported with grants of up to £500 each.

I said we were aiming to do the following in 2023:

- **Rhythm retreats** - **ACHIEVED**, with a schedule now in place thanks to Katie and Lee;
- **Church membership** - **ACHIEVED**, with a small initial sign up of new church members. We can all do more to encourage our churches to support our work;
- **Embracing leadership** - **ACHIEVED**, demonstrably so with our engagement across the sector, with statutory leaders, and Government;
- **Working group for authentic representation** - **NOT ACHIEVED**, as plans for this stalled in the transition period after the last AGM. The Board is prioritising authentic representation for 2023/24;
- **Our place at the table** - **ACHIEVED**, we continued to secure our position as experienced leaders with wisdom to share and resources to deploy;
- **Privileging LGBT+ voices** - **ACHIEVED**, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices who are often forgotten are given a platform to speak and that their voices are heard, a beautiful example being our Memorial Service for LGBT+ loss of life - which we hosted in April;
- **Communications development** - **ACHIEVED**, our engagement across all social media channels has increased, our newsletter and blog offerings are becoming more dynamic in content, and we are developing our video and vlog offerings;
- **Patrons** - **ACHIEVED**, I'm truly delighted that over the coming weeks we'll continue to announce our new team of Patrons - an amazing group with a breadth of skill, expertise, and experience. We will be hosting a day to meet the Patrons at the end of 2023; and
- **Global links** - **ACHIEVED**, as previously mentioned our global reach and influence is continuing to expand, which is an area of significant potential for us again in 2023/24.

Where to in 2023/24?

- New models have introduced students and churches to our membership. Encouraging new members, especially from beyond our traditional demographic (incl. internationally), is necessary in the coming year;
- Overall, our membership is down 5%. This is not surprising given the various economic crises that continue to be felt across the country (indeed, most of the feedback we receive on why memberships are being cancelled or not renewed is due to belts being tightened), we need to continue to encourage membership growth, but also diversify our income streams;
- A review of our strategy based on the above assessment, that includes new services and offerings beyond our membership model;
- A review of our staffing and capacity based on the strategy developed by the staff team and Board;



- The exploration of exciting opportunities that are becoming clear to us off the back of an initial sector review, with assessment and strategy to be reported in due course; and
- International, political, and theological engagement across sectors, institutions, and regions.

Final comments:

It has been quite the year, and I am grateful to the whole staff and volunteer team: Andrea, Jarel, David Owen, Hannah, Jo, Lisa-Jayne, Mark, Nigel, Pam, Lee, David Reading, August, and Katie. I am especially grateful for how everyone stepped up so significantly whilst I was on sabbatical and believe there is much to be learnt and to teach as LGBT+ leaders and allies in the area of rest and replenishment in particular.

A brief note of special thanks to Nigel, who is stepping down after (the maximum of) two terms on our Board of Trustees - and with whom we know this is not the end of our friendship! And to David Reading, who is stepping back from his volunteer commitment to our international offering as he focusses his time as Secretary of the European Forum of LGBT+ Christian Groups, and with whom again we will be keeping firmly in touch.

We have once again weathered a remarkably turbulent time, thank you for your continued support. I believe that OneBodyOneFaith is a vital element in the unfolding story of LGBT+ affirmation in the Christian church. Without our members and your passion, and the generous support in legacies from members who have remained committed for decades, we would not be looking ahead to 2023/24 with the same level of optimism.

I am excited at the task ahead, and there's much for us to do. Thank you for being a part of the team, for your giving, for your prayers, and for your companionship.

Stay tuned for further news on our strategic review, and as always, get in touch with questions, concerns, comments, or insight.

Luke Dowding
Executive Director
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