

## Annual Report 2017



**A pupil from Greenside School absorbed in the Christmas Journey**

**New Year Beckons—Peter Gordon**

**Focus on MAPS—Mandy Branders**

**Making a difference—Don Dowling**

**Hellos and Goodbyes**

connecting children with faith, hope & love

# *Making a Difference*

Dear Friends,

One thing that continues to excite and encourage me about Bridge Builders is the generosity and vision of those involved. This year we have a relatively new team of leaders in place and some new trustees, but Bridge Builders continues to thrive. Their commitment to, and ownership of, our core vision of connecting children, to faith, hope and love is undiminished. As Peter Gordon, our Honorary Director, observes in his report, part of our focus has necessarily changed with the arrival of new personnel with their particular giftings and skills. However, as one of our original team commented on a recent visit to our office, it is still very much the same Bridge Builders she had known.

Generosity is not limited to our leaders. We are vastly indebted to many volunteers who give so generously of their time to ensuring our projects run well and efficiently. Did you know, for instance, there is a team who work throughout the school year to produce the thousands of pieces of craft work for our Easter and Christmas Journeys, or that over 100 volunteers staff these events? What is also remarkable is the amount of funding that is raised locally through churches, individual donations and fundraising events. This provides a solid basis in helping to sustain our services. It also gives evidence to potential grant making bodies and charities that we enjoy considerable local support, and are prepared to dig in our own pockets to ensure this vital work continues. This makes a real difference, so thank you.

Recent reports and local experience show that schools often find it difficult to meet their statutory obligations in providing religious education. Among the reasons for this are not only funding issues, and pressures of the syllabus, but a dearth of teachers who are equipped and able to deliver the requirements of the RE syllabus. As a new syllabus is being promoted in Hertfordshire, Bridge Builders has undertaken to develop materials and model lessons that will support staff locally in the teaching of the Christian element of RE. We are indebted to Alex Horlock for initiating this work and to Mandy who is now developing it. We are currently exploring with local schools as to what we can offer and have had some encouraging responses. Please pray for Mandy as she takes this forward. Potentially this project will make a big difference to the teaching of RE locally.

During this year we said goodbye to two of our trustees. We wish to record our debt of gratitude to Canon Duncan Campbell, a long serving trustee of Bridge Builders who resigned early this year. The increasing commitments of his post in Watford together with the distance made it difficult for him to continue. We extend to him, and his family also, our deep sympathy and prayers for the loss of his wife Ann who died in a tragic accident this summer. Mrs Jo Simpson, a trustee and volunteer, has also resigned as she and her husband have moved out of the area. We wish them every blessing in their new home and thank them for all they contributed to Bridge Builders.

We welcome as new trustees Anthony Taylor, a retired pharmacist who worked for a multi-national company and is a member of St Nicholas Church Stevenage, and Alex Horlock, formerly our ExploRE Project Manager, who has agreed to serve for two years. Their wisdom and experience will be invaluable.

Finally, Teddy Faure Walker, one of Patrons has regrettably had to resign for health reasons. We thank him for all his support and wish him well for the future. We are very pleased, however, that our local MP, Stephen MacPartland JP, has kindly agreed to be a Patron. Please remember Bridge Builders in your prayers these make a great difference.

*Don*

Don Dowling, Chair of Trustees

## *The Bridge Builders Team*

### **Patrons**

Cllr. Sharon Taylor, O.B.E

Mr Stephen McPartland MP

Right Revd, Dr Michael Beasley, Bishop of Hertford

### **Project Managers and Leaders**

Mrs Mandy Branders: Projects Manager

Mrs Inga Voß: Journeys Project Leader

Mrs Anita Orton: MAPS Project Leader

### **Honorary Director**

Mr Peter Gordon

### **Administration**

Stephanie Knell: Administration Manager

Janice Hawketts: Finance and IT Manager

Amanda Bryant: Administrator

### **Trustees**

Revd Don Dowling (chair)

Revd. Steven Cooper

Mrs Alex Horlock

Mr Anthony Taylor

### **Chaplain**

Mr John Forster



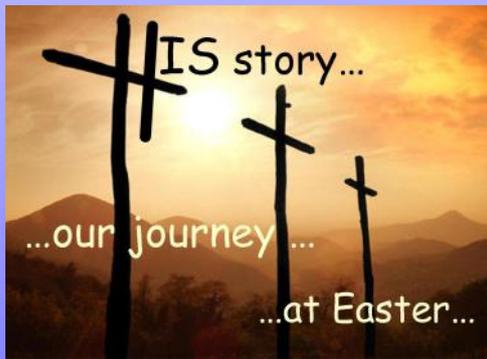


A child wrote... "I'm writing this to say thank you and it was really fun coming to your church. My favourite bit was making Bibles and also the crowns and the sheep. The best bit was the story about Jesus because Jesus is important because he is special. "

**The Christmas Journey** was held at three churches with about 880 children attending.... In 2017 we have over 1100 pupils booked in, which means our volunteers have prepared 21,000 pieces of craft!



"...Impressed by detailed planning. Very appropriate to the audiences...." A volunteer



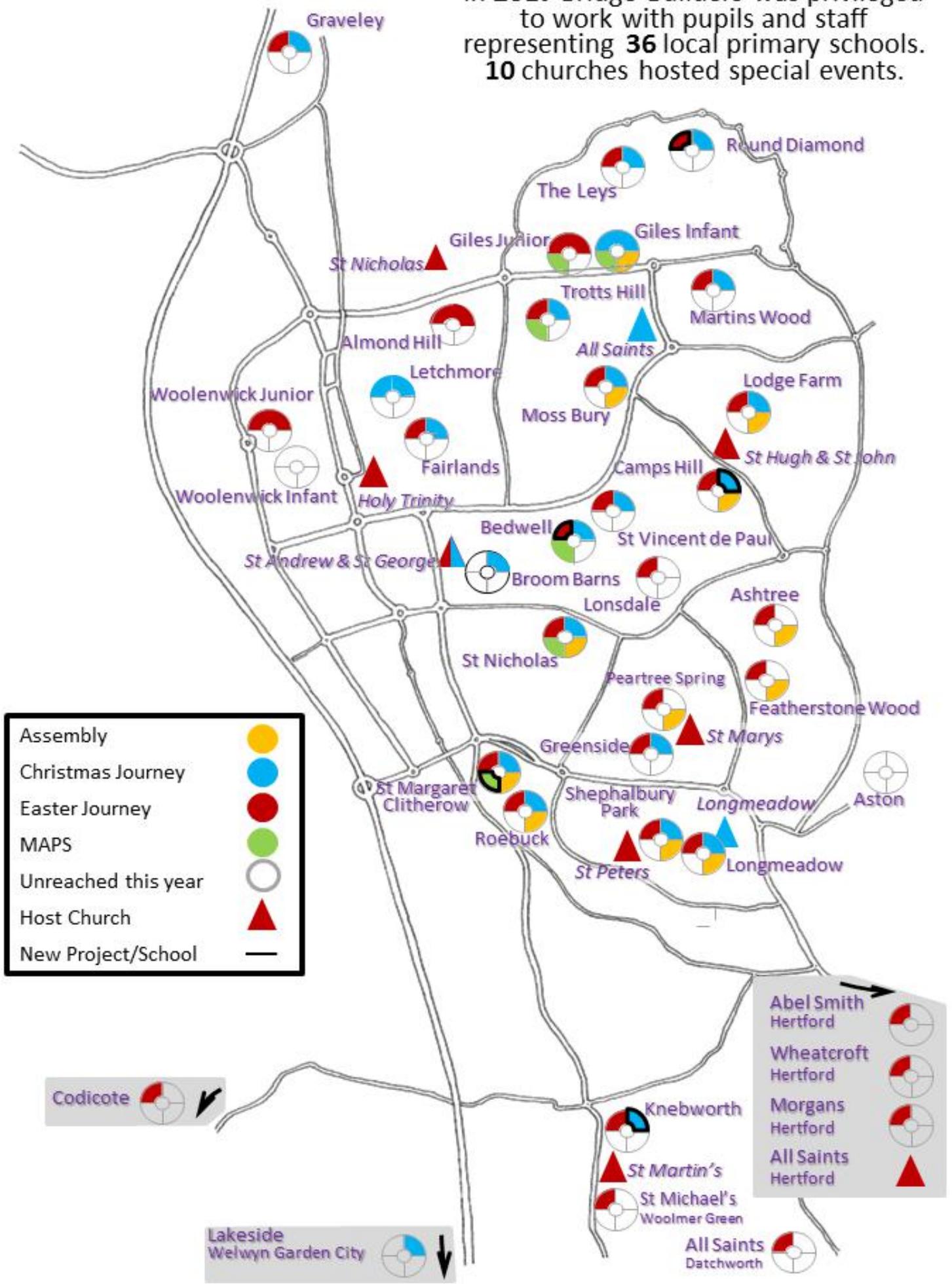
1289 pupils from year 6 attended **The Easter Journey** this year. Eight churches hosted in Stevenage, Knebworth and Hertford. Another church in Hertford also ran The Easter Journey after the school holidays and had another three schools attending, with 120 pupils.

"We felt that the Easter Story was brought alive for the children! They came away with a much deeper understanding of the events that took place and the perspective of the characters involved. This was invaluable in enhancing their understanding of Easter and what it means to Christians." A teacher



Assemblies are still being held in schools throughout Stevenage.

In **2017** Bridge Builders was privileged to work with pupils and staff representing **36** local primary schools. **10** churches hosted special events.



- Assembly 
- Christmas Journey 
- Easter Journey 
- MAPS 
- Unreached this year 
- Host Church 
- New Project/School 

- Abel Smith Hertford 
- Wheatcroft Hertford 
- Morgans Hertford 
- All Saints Hertford 



A summer garden party was held by Janis, one of our supporters, and it raised over £500! Both the Mayor of Stevenage and the Junior Mayor attended on the day.

# Friends of Bridge Builders

**believe** Bridge Builders Christian Trust has a significant role to play in Stevenage and the surrounding area and commit to supporting its ongoing work.

**aim to provide** consistent funding recognising that *regular giving* not only helps to inform the annual budget but also encourages the team with the knowledge that their work is valued and appreciated.

**Friends Prayer Meeting is the first Thursday of every month, 2—3 pm at St Paul's Methodist Church.**

**Coming up.....** Christmas Journey celebration and lunch, 12th December, 11—1 pm.

Bridge Builder Quiz Night on the 10th February



# MAPS

## Mentoring and Pastoral Support

### Helping children in finding 'The Way'

*The MAPS project is specifically designed to help prevent issues in schools from escalating into more dramatic incidents.*

#### *The MAPS Teams offer:*

- *A time to listen to and encourage children who are going through any form of emotional difficulty.*
- *To come alongside their parents who may be going through difficult times too.*
- *Practical support and strategies for the class teachers and also a listening ear.*

## Helping children deal with....

...Behaviour...

...Family Breakdown...

...Anger Management...

...Anxiety...

...Bereavement...

...Self Esteem...

...Loneliness and isolation...

Over this last year the MAPS teams have met with and supported 52 children. Every year there are some that no longer need help, and that is always our hope and goal.

Here is what two of the children had to say:

“Thank you for listening, it’s good to have someone to talk to.”

“I remembered the ‘Stop, Think, Go’ and it worked!”

One of our MAPS team commented:

“I worked with a child last year who was very quiet, struggled with confidence and didn’t speak very much. By the end of the year the child was very chatty and the school commented on how much more confidence they have in class.”

The MAPS teams are currently working in St Margaret Clitherow, Giles Infant School, Giles Junior School, Trotts Hill, St Nicholas and Bedwell School and we hope to be able to offer this service to as many schools as possible in the Stevenage area.

## Inga Voß

### *Journeys Project Leader*

In February 2017, Inga joined Bridge Builders to take on the role of running the Christmas Journey and the Easter Journey. She is applying her skills of planning and organisation to the Journeys, and is proving to be an asset to Bridge Builders. She has increased the number of pupils attending the Christmas Journey and is already working on the Easter Journey. She is originally from Germany and moved to the UK in August 2011 when she married Ben.



# Hello



## **Mandy Branders** *Projects Manager*

My time at Bridge Builders began with volunteering for the Christmas Journey in 2014 and from there I became a volunteer working alongside John Forster on the MAPS team. In May 2016 I began working part time for Bridge Builders with a focus of taking over John's role as MAPS Project

Manager the following year when he retired. I see it as a real privilege to be invited into schools to work alongside children who are going through a variety of struggles and to be able to offer them a listening ear and practical help through the Protective Behaviours Programme which is a proven and effective way to help children understand why they may feel the way they do and provides them with strategies to cope with what life may throw at them in a safe way.

We have a great team of MAPS volunteers who go into school each week offering support, encouragement and most importantly a listening ear. It has been a pleasure to work alongside each of them and I thank them for their time and skills they each offer to this vital work.

I am also pleased to introduce the newest member of our MAPS team, Anita Orton.



## **Anita Orton** *MAPS Project Leader*

Anita is originally from Poland and has been living in England since 2005. Anita is married to Peter Orton who is the Minister at All Saints Church in Pin Green. Anita has vast experience in working with vulnerable children and has qualifications in Pedagogy, Person Centred Counselling and

Systematic Therapy—Family Constellation Method. Anita is looking forward to working with and supporting children and their families as part of the MAPS team.

## **Tracy Plumpton - Project Manager - Launchpad**

At Easter 2017, Tracy decided the time had come to wave goodbye to Bridge Builders, and the Launchpad project. A long-term team member, she faithfully spearheaded this project initially in St Hugh & St John Church in Chells, and supported its development into St Peter's Church, Broadwater.

Tracy didn't just work for Bridge Builders — she also worked at St Andrew's Church, Hertford developing their youth programme. She now continues to serve St Andrews as their Youth and Children's Worker. We would like to express our sincere thanks to her for all her work as a Project Manager and member of the Core Leadership Team.



# Goodbye



## **Alex Horlock - Project Manager - ExploRE**

Alex joined Bridge Builders in 2012 and thoroughly embraced her new role as Project Manager of the ExploRE project. She championed tying the Christmas and Easter Journeys and the school assemblies, with the National Curriculum Links to the HERTS RE Syllabus. Her enthusiasm and drive for her work, and the attention to detail she insisted on within her projects was outstanding.

This year saw Alex, and her husband Tim, move churches to Chorleywood. Alex continued to commute to work at Bridge Builders whilst their eldest daughter completed her GCSE education. She is now serving us as a Trustee. We would like to express our sincere thanks to her for all her work as a Project Manager and member of the Core Leadership Team.

## **John Forster - Project Manager - Maps**

John has taken his second career retirement this year as we said goodbye to him as Project Manager of MAPS. He took early retirement from his teaching career in 2002, and has been working for Bridge Builders ever since.

John headed the team of volunteers who, week by week, go quietly about their work of getting alongside individual children in local primary schools who, for an enormous variety of reasons, find life particularly stressful. He also led the Whale Tales team who go into schools delivering an event which helps children in year 5 understand and apply Protective Behaviours.

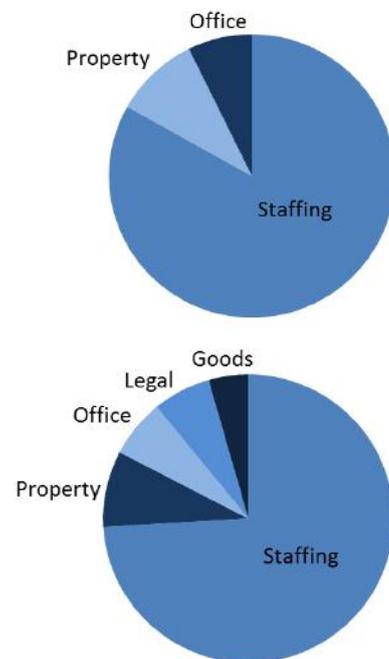
We wish John all the very best in his 'retirement' but we couldn't keep him away and he continues to serve Bridge Builders as a volunteer and in a chaplaincy role to our Team.



# Accounts

Income	2017	2016
Donations	£40,377	£32,289
Gift Aid	£4,271	£3,174
Activities	£17,853	£32,468
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£62,501</b>	<b>£67,931</b>
Expenditure	2017	2016
Staffing Costs	£41,923	£37,814
Property Costs	£4,830	£4,930
Office Expenses	£3,673	£3,093
Legal & Professional	£3,660	£5,800
Cost of Goods Sold	£2,501	£4,638
Write off Bad Debts	0	£24
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£56,587</b>	<b>£56,300</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>£5,914</b>	<b>£11,631</b>

## Income and Expenditure (£) for the year ended 31 August 2017



Assets	2017	2016
Cash	£48,187	£42,312
Prepayments	£1,139	£547
Sundry Debtors	£858	£1,271
	£50,184	£44,130

Current Liabilities	2017	2016
Creditors	£1,084	£74
Receipts in Advance	0	£870

Net Assets	£49,099	£43,185
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Represented by General Fund		
Balance Brought Forward	£43,185	£31,554
Surplus / (Deficit) for the Year	£5,914	£11,631
<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	<b>£49,099</b>	<b>£43,185</b>

## Many thanks to:-

*The Barnabas Trust, Bunyan Baptist Church, Holy Trinity, Herts SACRE, Knebworth Family of Churches, Longmeadow Evangelical Church, Souter Charitable Trust, Sirius Digital Solutions, St Hugh & St John, St Martin's Knebworth, St Mary's Graveley, St Mary's Shephall, St Nicholas, St Peter's, Trinity Church Knebworth and individual donors for your generous support.*

## ***New Year Beckons***

Every year a whole new generation of children begin school life. For many of these children the gospel story is largely unknown. All these children are called to share God's love and they need to be told about Jesus. In turn, we in Bridge Builders, are called to support their parents, families, teachers and churches in bringing them that wonderful gospel.

Bridge Builders continues to be blessed, often in unexpected ways, but particularly in the recruitment of outstanding, highly motivated and well qualified staff.

Over the last two years all four members of the Core Leadership Team who were active in 2015 have left us for various reasons. Together with Sheila Smith, the previous Director, they created a strong organisation with a superb work ethic and they set a magnificent example of how to serve.

In the annual report last year I told of how Steph Knell and Janice Hawketts have taken over the administration and finance roles, previously filled by Justine Hobbs, and this new arrangement is working very well. In this academic year, Tracy Plumpton has left to become Youth and Children's Worker at St Andrew's, Hertford. Sadly Tracy's leaving has meant that we have ceased to operate a Launchpad service in Stevenage but we will continue to find other ways to bring the teaching of Christian scripture to local children.

John Forster has retired but is continuing as a volunteer to support the MAPS project so we will continue to benefit from his experience and expertise. Alex Horlock has also left us following her family's move out of the area but has become a Trustee to offer continuity. All of Alex's and John's work has been picked up and will be expanded.

The valuable contributions made by Justine, John, Alex and Tracy have been outstanding and have set us a very high standard to follow. They have been replaced by a whole new team of enthusiastic, dedicated, and committed people who have brought with them a range of wonderful skills and experience all relevant to our work in Bridge Builders.

We have reorganised to make the very best use of these great people. Mandy Branders is now Projects Manager, responsible for developing and delivering all the services we offer to children and to schools. Mandy's team includes Inga Voß, who joined us early in 2017 working as Journeys Project Leader and in September 2017 Anita Orton joined Bridge Builders as MAPS Project Leader. Later in the year Mandy is also planning to introduce a range of RE lessons in schools in line with the revised curriculum in Hertfordshire.

We enter the new year full of hope and promise, still very much relying on all our many supporters as volunteers, for funding, and for their prayers. Thank you all for helping us to make great strides in the recent years, and for encouraging us to face the future with confidence.

*Peter*

Peter Gordon, Honorary Director



Father of Lights,  
By your Spirit shine out through us  
to the children of our communities.  
Kindle in them  
a spark of faith,  
a ray of hope  
and the fire of your love.

**Thank you for all your support!**

**Please continue to pray for the work  
of Bridge Builders**

Supported by:



**Bridge Builders Christian Trust**

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