



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

It has been good to read in this report about the work of the Furniture Project. The work of the volunteers in this area ensures that as a charity we can support families when they are in need of items such as beds and wardrobes or microwaves and toasters. We are delighted when a family who may have been waiting many months in temporary accommodation are moved into a home which they can call their own. The Furniture Project team is on hand to support them with items already in stock and continue the hunt for those still needed.

The five projects which make up Christian CARE distinguish us from many other charities. There are food banks which support people with food, other charities may supply furniture etc., but there are very few charities which offer the holistic approach to supporting a family in need which Christian CARE aims to do. Earlier this year Gillian, our CARE Coordinator, shared an article with the Trustees written by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown. In it he recognised 'multibanks', i.e. places combining food and other voluntary services which he had observed springing up out of necessity to the challenging times which many families are facing and supplementing services that he thought should be provided by the state. Gillian pointed out that Christian CARE is a multibank in that it provides under one roof food, furniture, clothes and some befriending support which saves people spending time and money travelling round looking for the individual services. We offer a variety of services as a charity and this is what makes us unique. This we are able to continue to do with your help.

Throughout this past year we have been endeavouring to find new volunteers to support our work. I am delighted that a number of people have joined us and are now working as part of the office team or supporting the different projects.

In particular we welcome Canute D'Aguiar, our new Finance Manager and also Transport Organiser, the latter role having been vacated by Lizzie Chilcott. However, as I am writing this, I am aware that two vital leadership roles have yet to be filled. Despite our efforts to find a Children's and Families' Activities Coordinator it remains unfilled. We are grateful for the very experienced team members of this Project who have enabled the work to continue and so birthdays continue to be celebrated, Christmas presents were shared and a number of children and young people were able to enjoy summer camps and a summer outing. We have also been unable to recruit an Assistant CARE Coordinator to support Gillian. As Trustees we are now looking at alternative ways to ensure the leadership of the charity is secure when Gillian steps down from the CARE Coordinator role at the end of this year.

In spite of these challenges, the work of Christian CARE continues on a daily basis and I am very grateful for all volunteers who give their time and support to help others. With the generosity of financial donations we were once again able to support two families in having a holiday at Butlin's this year. As has been reported in the financial report, the Mayor of Merton's donation and the generous legacy from John Golden's estate meant that we were able to purchase a new van for the charity to use which runs efficiently and is ULEZ compliant.

Once again, I want to express my thanks for your continued patronage, be it financial, physical or in prayer. I am aware that there are many charities which are seeking support and we are very grateful at Christian CARE, that each year the charity is sustained by people old and new. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke:25-37) tells the story of one man helping another even though they were enemies.

The man from Samaria saw a man who was in need of help and he provided shelter and medical support. Jesus asked his audience "... of the men who passed by the man who had been attacked which of them was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The reply was, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Thank you for your continued mercy and support which ensures that Christian CARE can help others.

With good wishes,

Jane Savill  
Chair of Trustees

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT 31 MARCH 2023

**Jane Savill** - Chair  
**Pat Spencer** - Hon. Secretary  
**Ann Thimont** - Hon. Treasurer  
**The Revd Julian Burling**  
**The Revd Tom Kavanagh, CBE**  
**Dr. Ann Phillips**

## CARE COMMITTEE

**Gillian Thick** - CARE Coordinator

## Coordinators:

Baby, Children's & Household – **Barbara Moreland**  
 Befrienders - **Sylvia Baxter**  
 Children's Activities - **Vacant**  
 Family Support - **Rehana Edun-Noys**  
 Furniture Project - **Nick Wolff**  
 Office - **Cresso Scarlett**

## TREASURER'S REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	2023	2022
	£	£
<b>UNRESTRICTED FUNDS</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
External Grants	25,500	5,000
Donations	21,242	20,152
Legacy	10,000	-
Fund-Raising Appeals	14	6
Interest Received	698	1,720
Gift Aid	4,031	1,720
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<b>Total Income</b>	<b>61,485</b>	<b>28,598</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>(37,508)</b>	<b>(23,895)</b>
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<b>Net Incoming Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>23,977</b>	<b>4,703</b>
	=====	=====
<b>RESTRICTED FUNDS</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
Donations	3186	470
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	3186	470
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>(3,417)</b>	<b>(220)</b>
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<b>Net (Outgoing)/Incoming Restricted Funds</b>	<b>(231)</b>	<b>250</b>
	=====	=====
Management and Administration	(5,291)	(5,258)
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<b>NET INCOMING/ (OUTGOING) FUNDS</b>	<b>18,455</b>	<b>(305)</b>
Total Funds brought forward	164,255	164,560
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<b>Total Funds carried forward</b>	<b>182,710</b>	<b>164,255</b>
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BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2023			
	2023	2022	
	£	£	
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible Assets	26,180	-	
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Short Term Investments	60,000	75,725	
Cash at Bank	88,923	86,007	
Debtors and prepayments	8,855	2,629	
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	<b>157,778</b>	<b>164,361</b>	
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Sundry Creditors	(1,248)	(106)	
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	<b>156,530</b>	<b>164,255</b>	
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	<b>182,710</b>	<b>164,255</b>	
	=====	=====	
<b>FUNDS</b>			
General Fund	182,710	164,255	
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	<b>182,710</b>	<b>164,255</b>	
	=====	=====	

This is an extract from the full accounts available at the Annual General Meeting on 31 October 2023 or by application to the Chair or Honorary Secretary.

In the year to 31 March 2023, the charity's total income was £64,671, a considerable increase from £29,068 in 2022. Donations from individuals increased and we received a generous legacy of £10,000 from our former vice chair and long-term supporter and volunteer, John Golden. We also received £19,000 as one of the Mayor of Merton's chosen charities, and £5,000 from the ULEZ van scrappage scheme.

The charity's expenditure in 2023 was £46,216 (2022: £29,373). Spending on Family Support was £20,865 (2022: £13,150) and that specifically for children, such as birthdays, school uniform and outings, was £2,480 (2022: £2,184). We were delighted to be able to send two families on a week's summer holiday and that camps for our youngsters recommenced. We purchased a van to enable us to continue the Furniture Project (cost £26,353). As well as running the van and renting two garages for storage, we buy items which cannot be donated, such as mattresses and white goods. These costs increased to £9,157 (2022: £6,501) due to higher insurance premiums and purchasing more household items.

I would like to record our great appreciation of those who regularly support our work, as well as of first-time donors. At 31 March 2023, the funds of the charity were £182,710 (2022: £164,255) which the Board of Trustees considers to be sufficient to enable us to continue our current level of support. We are committed to supporting as many needy and vulnerable families and individuals as possible as well as ensuring that our level of reserves remains robust.

**Ann Thimont**

**Honorary Treasurer**

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**www.christiancaremerton.org.uk**

### VIEWS FROM OUR FURNITURE PROJECT

The main reward in working on the Furniture Project is to see the delight on the faces of the clients who receive the pieces. We get plenty of thanks, cups of tea (not to be knocked over in a cramped room) and even family snack specialities; Ghanaian spicy rice and delicious baklava come to mind. Particularly poignant is to see children who are in need of a decent bed, get something that particularly pleases them. When older children or teenage family members are standing around, I like to get them to help; 'could you do up the nuts on the other three corners while I tighten this one?'

I have had to get used to the fact that although a family may be without basic furnishing, they still have their own taste; modern IKEA is much more acceptable than old 'brown' pieces (however serviceable) and the occasional leather sofa that comes our way is always appreciated. Boys like sturdy pine beds and teenage girls like curly white metal headboards.

Another pleasure of being part of the Furniture team comes from fellowship as we hump pieces around, up several flights of stairs, in lifts, around corners and through doorways, trying not to scratch the paintwork or rip the wallpaper. We try not to dismantle things too much, to minimise reassembly. For that reason, we are not keen on donations of large wardrobes or grand three-seater settees, but it is surprising how locating a couple of hidden bolts sometimes drops off the arms of a sofa. Worst of all, is when a donated wardrobe has to have its whole hardboard back removed by prising out dozens of small nails in order to disassemble it. And when it gets to the family that is receiving it, it often has to lie on its front to be put together when there's little floor space available. We have also extended our flatpack vocabulary; 'pass the snail nuts' 'that one's Phillips, but this is Posidrive!' We have been known to take off front doors to get furniture in, and, being highly IT savvy (!), we sometimes download the manufacturer's instructions to make sense of a pile of mysteriously shaped melamine planks and panels.

Nick Wolff is Mr. Furniture; the time and dedication he puts into managing the project impress me enormously. He manages the referrals from the office, communication with donors and clients and the stock kept in the storage garages and liaises with our befrienders about the clients' needs. I can get confused over a day's itinerary, but Nick is on top of the day's logistics. And in action, his strength in stopping a wardrobe plummeting down someone's stairs is astonishing, belied by his wiry frame!



For about a year Paul Spooner and I have been providing DIY services too. We assemble new flatpack furniture that the charity buys for some clients; at least then, we have the luxury of an instruction leaflet. We also put up or repair curtain rails, hang curtains and, of course, fix up shelves. It is fantastic to bring some nice thick lined curtains to someone who has been making do with a square of cloth held up with Blu Tack or drawing pins.

The purchase of the replacement van was essential to ensure we had a ULEZ compliant vehicle, but the old one was a testimony to the robustness of a Transit. For years we nursed the gearbox that kept popping out, but when the old timer heard it was to be replaced it seized its gearbox, to Nick and Ciaran's dismay, and burst it with a bang and a gush of oil when it got hauled onto the scrappage trailer. Thanks to generous donations we are now set for many years of reliable collecting and delivering. The newcomer may well see many of us out!

Which brings me to finish by observing that most of us on the project are getting somewhat aged. We are on the lookout for people (of any gender) who are tough, gritty and determined, and have time to spare and a bit more youth!

**Graham Bennett, DIY Organiser and Furniture Project Volunteer Helper**

It is always nice to be able to help people and the Furniture Project has two sides to it. Those who have good furniture, but need for some reason to say goodbye to it; and those who need things but cannot afford to buy them. The job necessitates meeting new people as well as having on-going contacts sometimes lasting years. Some of our customers are English, but many are from every corner of the globe. I am constantly surprised at how often I am impressed, heartened and genuinely delighted by the people I come across. I often think 'well Britain is lucky to have such people come to our shores'!

So, a real plus for me is meeting, talking with and getting to know so many people from so many parts of the world.

**Nick Wolff, Furniture Project Coordinator**