

WANTED! More trustees for Christian organisations

Trustees' Week, an annual event to showcase the great work that trustees do and to highlight opportunities for people from all walks of life to get involved and make a difference, is being celebrated 2 to 8 November.

The Evangelical Alliance, alongside Global Connections and Stewardship, see trustees playing good roles as a fantastic asset to the work of Christian charities of all types. Charities with the right trustees involved with head and heart are strengthened almost incalculably.

Yet, in a room full of Christian charity directors or charity board chairs, a significant majority will tell you that more skilled trustees are needed. It seems to be hard to match supply and demand.

Why is this? We think it is because, as in so many areas of life, people discount themselves as not being right for it and miss the value they could add from personal involvement. They don't need to be charity law experts; in fact they don't need to be 'expert' in anything, although experience and skill is undeniably helpful. As 1 Corinthians 12 explains, this is about bringing 'who you are' and giving time to strengthen 'the whole'.

The most needed seem to be under-40s, women and those from ethnic backgrounds



Name: Chine Mbubaegbu
Profession: Director of Communications, Evangelical Alliance
Trustee for:

Church & Media Network, Christian Enquiry Agency, Sophia Network

Why do you volunteer your time as a trustee?

I have found that I often get as much back from being a trustee as the charities get from me serving them. It's a chance to give to causes that I'm already extremely passionate about and see how I can use my skillset to further the charity's aims. As someone who is a relatively young person on trustee boards, I have found that the breadth of experience I've gained has helped me in my own development: from learning about strategy to risk assessment to HR to financial management.



Name: Andrew Forsyth
Profession: Civil servant
Trustee for: The Bethany Children's Trust

Why do you volunteer your time as a trustee?

The child-centred nature of BCT, championing the most disadvantaged and marginalised children in different African nations, is what compelled me to get involved. Being a trustee has given me a fresh perspective on what being part of God's global family looks like, and the power of prayer in day-to-day life.

with professional skills. The needs vary from one charity to another, but those working in finance, HR, law, property, strategy, organisational development, marketing or communications are highly valued. But it isn't just technical skills – it's about experience, it is the understanding of those the charity is reaching and it is about a team coming to good decisions.

Recent research by the Evangelical Alliance's research club with 1,200 respondents indicated that 23 per cent of evangelicals already act as trustees, while another 20 per cent would be willing if the opportunity arose and 24 per cent would consider, with relevant training. This same study found only nine per cent said they didn't think they had relevant experience, and just four per cent weren't interested.

More than half of those asked would be willing to take up a role if they had some help. So together, the Evangelical Alliance, Stewardship and Global Connections are trying to address the shortage. Global Connections and the Alliance already work jointly to host a governance hub and a forum for CEOs, and want to build on this to better resource their member organisations and churches as well as other charities by:



Name: Claire Rush
Profession: advocacy coordinator for The Girls' Brigade England & Wales
Trustee for:

The Girls' Brigade International and Sophia Network

Why do you volunteer your time as a trustee?

I passionately believe in the Kingdom vision and mission of both organisations that I'm involved with. As someone who was first a trustee when I was 23, I believe that it's important and essential to have the voice of young people, particularly women, represented on charitable bodies; they have an important contribution to make.

- Making Christians more aware of the amazing value of the role and the shortage of trustees
- Advertising specific vacancies and matching them to competent candidates
- Providing opportunities to help train potential trustees

The charity commission encourages us to 'fish' beyond our own known contacts, yet most Christian charities are concerned that they might recruit those who don't fully share their values. Matching trustees to organisations is important, and like most good relationships, need a time of testing



Name: Mike Hyde
Profession: Logistics general manager
Trustee for: AWM Pioneers
Why do you

volunteer your time as a trustee?

Identification with and support of the aims of the charity, desire to use my business skills and experience in providing good governance. My commitment to praying for and seeing God's kingdom come in their particular field gives me an insight and better understanding into the lives of the workers, the contexts they work in and the people they are working alongside.

WHO/WHAT IS A TRUSTEE?

Trustees are the people in charge of a charity. They play a vital role, volunteering their time and working together to make important decisions about the charity's work.

They may be called trustees, the board, the management committee, governors, directors or something else.

WHERE CAN I GET TRAINING AS A TRUSTEE?

- Stewardship for trustee support materials, training and more individual services stewardship.org.uk/
- Anthony Collins solicitors anthonicollins.com/
- The Global Connections and Evangelical Alliance governance hub globalconnections.org.uk/forums/governance-hub
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations ncvo.org.uk

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CHARITY TRUSTEE?

An important background text is the Charity Commission's publication The essential trustee what you need to know. Trustees have six main duties, you can read about them by visiting:

gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK IF I'M APPROACHED TO BE A TRUSTEE?

I'm regularly asked for advice by people who've been approached to be a trustee for the first time. I'd recommend that anyone who is approached should ask:

- to attend a trustees (board) meeting as an observer
- for a copy of the strategic plan
- for a copy of the most recent annual report and financial statements - the trustees report will be the most interesting bit if you aren't very financially literate
- for a copy of the governing document to understand what the object of the charity is, what it has powers to do and how it operates
- What they're particularly hoping you will contribute
- How much time will be expected. NB Many trustees are expected to give time for activities beyond the formal board meetings so clarify the expectation at the outset.

WHY BECOME A TRUSTEE?

- to use your skills, experience, knowledge and ideas to make a lasting difference to a cause or organisation you care about
- to develop new and transferable skills
- to widen your horizons and broaden your experience
- to learn about corporate governance
- to work with new people who share your passion
- to learn how other organisations do things, which could benefit you in your own employed role
- to enhance your CV and possibly open your eyes to other career paths
- And it's the perfect volunteering opportunity for busier people.



Name: Ruth Hyde
Profession: Local Authority chief executive
Trustee for: AIM (Africa Inland Mission)

Why do you volunteer your time as a trustee?

It's an immense and rewarding privilege to use the skills and experience God has given me to help reach the unreached people of Africa with the gospel; especially in working with other trustees to devise strategic goals, financial planning and ensuring missionaries are properly supported and cared for. In the course of this work I have constantly been inspired by the many Christ-like people serving God at home and abroad.

the water, but fresh and external views can be extremely valuable.

Employers should be encouraged to allow staff to take time off to be charity trustees as it's an opportunity for personal development. Virtually every time I've attended a trustee meeting I've returned having learnt something new that will

benefit me and my employer. And we've not had to pay fees for a training course.

You can find trustee vacancies on the Evangelical Alliance's easilyfound.it website, or by visiting the Christian Vocations website, which is run by Global Connections: globalconnections.org.uk/vocations

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