

49. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster

Introduction

This report from the Managing Trustees gives an overview of the varied activities and events which have been part of the life of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster during 2015-16. The Church and the Conference Centre reach out to a vast number of residents and workers in London and the South East, as well as to visitors from all over the UK and the world.

Ministry of the Church

The team ministry has seen a smooth transition of leadership with the arrival of the new superintendent minister, the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins. The ministers have the support and loyalty of church officers and other volunteers in carrying out a diverse range of tasks. The key focus and meeting point for the congregation is Sunday morning worship, where visitors join a gathered community of regular worshippers each week. Mid-week worship and Bible and fellowship groups offer opportunities for a deepening of discipleship in an atmosphere of hospitable welcome. Membership now stands at c440, with a typical morning attendance of 280, with c60 for evening services – rising to c100 for healing services.

Deacon Kina Saunders coordinates pastoral care for church members and those in the extended church family alike. Work amongst children and young people continues to flourish, and there are exciting plans to engage with a visiting group of young people from Palestine later this year. All-age worship services, held quarterly and led by the Revd Tony Miles, are a welcome feature of Sunday morning worship. “The Sanctuary” - a creative contemporary worship service - meets on Thursdays and includes members who have volunteered to assist at a winter night shelter run by Westminster Churches Together. Tony continues his valuable work in broadcasting, in both Christian and mainstream media.

Healing Ministry, under the leadership of the Revd Peter Edwards, continues to be an important part of the life at Central Hall and is valued by the many who attend.

As part of serving the local community in Westminster, we host drop in projects for those living with mental illness and those with Parkinson’s Disease. Both of these projects are run in partnership with ecumenical and NHS contacts. Another long-standing partnership has been that with the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, as together we run the St Vincent’s Family Project, which is based in an extended community suite at Central Hall.

During the year the Church has adopted the Welcome Box project to connect with and serve migrants and refugees located in central London.

Chaplaincy continues to play an important part of the work, with Martyn Atkins as chaplain to the Methodists in Parliament, Tony Miles as Media Chaplain and Kina Saunders as chaplain to the St Vincent’s Family Project.

A key role for the Church at Methodist Central Hall is acting as a facilitator for events led by a whole range of different ministries and charities, thus the building is used to serve the London District, the Connexion and the wider Christian community.

As was widely reported in British media, an application to Westminster City Council to locate a sculpture of the ‘Homeless Jesus’ by internationally renowned sculpture Timothy Schmalz was refused. An appeal is underway, and an online petition now has many hundreds of supporters.

The Conference Centre

Mr Paul Southern, Managing Director, leads the Conference Centre team as it works tirelessly to market the facilities of Central Hall, which forms the largest conference venue in Central London, with over 25 rooms. The year ending August 2015 was very successful, with record turnover from events and the café. The Company was able to contribute over £1.3M for the Trustees to maintain and develop the building and support the ministry at Central Hall.

The Conference Centre team continues to work hard in developing links with new markets and to maintain standards as a world class conference and events centre – demonstrating a welcome that reflects our Methodist identity to all who use the building. Central Hall Westminster won the C&IT “Best Use of Event Technology” award for the ‘Meet the Future’ event as well as being judged the “Most Tech Friendly Venue” in the Event Technology Awards.

The range of events that takes place at the hall continues to be exciting, with particular highlights:

- Celebration of 70 years since the launch of the United Nations at Central Hall, including a public event with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon; strategic venues across the world turned blue on United Nations Day - The Great Wall of China, The Empire State Building, Sydney Opera House, The Pyramids, Christ the Redeemer in Rio and Methodist Central Hall;
- Fox Sports Australia transmitted from the roof of Central Hall during the Rugby World Cup;
- The BBC New Year’s Eve Concert featuring Bryan Adams in the Great Hall, as well as fantastic views from the roof across the city;
- Graduation ceremonies for the Royal Veterinary College, Brunel University and the Hult International Business School;
- Premier Radio has broadcast from the building on numerous occasions;
- An increasing number of pop and classical concerts, including several concerts showcasing the organ in the Great Hall;
- Several films have used the grandeur of Central Hall’s interior as a location, the latest being Florence Foster Jenkins starring Meryl Streep and Hugh Grant.

All events are judged against ethical criteria and proposed events have been rejected from organisations promoting violence, alcohol, tobacco or other subjects conflicting with Methodist principles and/or Standing Orders.

The Building

Maintaining a building of the status and complexity of Central Hall is a constant challenge and the Trustees are committed to effective and efficient programme of maintenance and refurbishment. Dealing with general maintenance and decoration is a permanent and on-going task, alongside particular major projects. The last year has seen replacement of central heating radiators throughout the building, the painting of the ceiling and alcoves in The Great Hall and purchase of 900 new chairs for the Great Hall, with wider bases and padding. The building continues to be in good order.

The Future

The Sunday congregation continues to grow and the community engagement of the Church demonstrates the Methodist Commitment to an outward oriented mission, with God’s love at its heart. The business is in a much stronger position than in recent years, with many clients returning and new clients are being added, with some bookings two and three years in advance.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

49/1. The Conference adopted the Report.

49/2. The Conference appointed the following Managing Trustees of the Conference Property at Central Hall Westminster:

The Revd Michaela Youngson (Chair of the Managing Trustees and Convener – ex officio)

The Revd Dr Martyn D Atkins (Superintendent, London Westminster – ex officio)

The Revd Graham Thompson (Treasurer to the Trustees)

Mr David Morgan (Secretary to the Trustees)

***Mr Tony Ackah-Yensu**

Mr Kojo Amoah-Arko

***The Revd Anthony D Miles**

Mrs Judith Mitchell

***Ms Grace Sangmuah**

Mr Ian Serjeant

Ms Helen Tudor

The Revd Jason Vinyard

a vacancy

** Indicates the people nominated by the Westminster Circuit Meeting.*