

8. Methodist Ministers' Housing Society

1. Celebrating 60 Years

In 2008 the Society celebrated its 60th anniversary.

The agreed objectives for the celebrations were to give thanks for the vision and generosity of the last 60 years and to raise awareness of the Society's work both in the Methodist Connexion and further afield.

Three services of thanksgiving have been held (Central Hall Westminster, Kendal and Scarborough) with tenants, members of the Society and local Methodists attending.

Leaflets and worship material have been produced and sent out to all Methodist Superintendents. Requests have been received from a number of Methodist circuits for more information and special services and events have been held in various churches.

A reception at the House of Commons hosted by the Rt Hon Hilary Armstrong MP was attended by Society members, staff, tenants, MPs and Peers.

Local radio stations and press have been provided with information which has resulted in a number of newspaper articles and interviews on Sunday programmes.

2. Meeting the Need in a Period of Uncertainty in the Housing Market

As at August 2008 there were 928 ministerial tenants in Society, Auxiliary Fund and Management Trustee properties.

In the year under review 90 ministers and 5 deacons were permitted by the Conference to become supernumeraries. Of these 31 were accepted by the Society to be housed. In addition 13 ministers retiring on health grounds and 1 widow were provided with accommodation. 17 tenants were transferred to properties more suitable for their requirements.

During the year, 9 existing Society properties were refurbished and allocated to new and transferring ministerial applicants. 45 properties were purchased and 25 properties that had become surplus to requirements were sold.

The number of sales was significantly lower than the budgeted figure. This was as a result of the sharp downturn in the housing market from April 2008. 72 properties became vacant during the year and only 25 of these were sold. There were 37 properties either on the market or identified for sale as at 31 August 2008.

The majority of purchases were negotiated before this downturn and the Society could not, therefore, take advantage of the lower prices. As ministers retiring from the active work often leave the manse in July it was, therefore, essential that transactions were completed to meet this deadline.

This has had a serious impact on the Society's cash flow and resulted in £2.5 million being borrowed from the Auxiliary Fund and Methodist Chapel Aid to ensure that purchases made for those retiring could be completed. The loan of £500,000 to Methodist Chapel Aid has been repaid.

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A plan has been agreed by the board for 2008/9 to ensure best use is made of available resources in order to meet the needs of those ministers retiring during the year. Applicants have been provided with a list of vacant properties and urged to consider any which may be suitable. When a property is identified as suitable any required refurbishment is agreed. This ensures that a good home is available for each applicant at the date of retirement.

The Society's charitable rules state that we house retired ministers, deacons and their widow(er)s upon terms appropriate to their means. Applicants with less than £50,000 are not expected to contribute towards the cost of their home whilst those with in excess of this amount are expected to contribute through our shared equity scheme – 37 applicants made equity contributions in 2007/8. Presbyters and deacons with over £200,000 are expected to provide their own housing. In the financial year 2008/9 the Society's maximum contribution will be £155,000.

The Society received donations from the

Auxiliary Fund and Methodist Insurance PLC together with donations from individuals, churches and circuits. No grants are received from statutory bodies and the financial and prayerful support of the Methodist family is therefore greatly appreciated by all those involved in the Society.

3. Governance

The Society's rules require board members to step down after a 6 year period. As a result 4 vacancies arose in February 2009. Following interviews the Revd John Harrod, Mrs Debbie Faulkner, Mr Brian Roberts and Mr Rob Lolley were appointed.

The Revd Michael Wearing stood down as Chair in February 2009. The newly appointed Chair is the Revd Ian White.

Mrs Margaret Beck and Mrs Brenda Ducker resigned as members of the Society. Their contribution to the work of the Society and their support over many years is recorded with appreciation.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 8/1.** The Conference received the Report.
- 8/2.** The Conference approved the appointment of the Revd John Harrod, Mrs Debbie Faulkner, Mr Brian Roberts and Mr Rob Lolley as members of the Society.
- 8/3.** The Conference noted the resignation of Mrs Margaret Beck and Mrs Brenda Ducker as members of the Society.