

## Introduction

This Managing Trustees' Report gives an overview of the work and witness of the Methodist Central Hall Westminster during 2009–2010. This has been a year in which the nation has experienced much anxiety and despondency in relation to the global economy. Located at the heart of the capital city, the Central Hall has played its part in being (to quote a recent visitor) “an oasis of calm and spiritual thought in the turmoil of London”.

## Ministry of the Church

The team ministry under the leadership of Revd. Martin Turner has been greatly supported by the loyalty and generosity of regular members and visitors. Sunday morning services in the Great Hall and evenings in the Chapel have sustained levels of attendance, despite frequent travel problems such as tube and train suspensions for rail works and parking restrictions for road works. In the words of the Superintendent Minister, “We are blessed with such a rich fellowship within our Christian family at Westminster. Different peoples from across the world sharing in worship and working together.” Such a diverse and geographically spread congregation brings its own demands to the pastoral work of the church. This aspect of ministry is ably led by Sister Jane Middleton assisted by a team of lay helpers. It is worthy of note that the church membership has passed 400 for the first time in 30 years. The contribution of Revd. Gordon Newton, Honorary Assistant Minister, is highly valued across a wide range of ministerial duties including preaching.

The work of the church alongside children and young people has been most encouraging. Nine of them have been confirmed as new members, and in addition twelve members have been received by transfer. All-Age worship services held quarterly and led by Revd. Tony Miles, include participation in song, drama, dance and prayers from the children in JC Live and the Young Peoples' Fellowship. “The Sanctuary” – a fellowship of those in the 18 to 40 age group – has continued to attract many new members, and this year has included a teaching series focused on the Holy Spirit and on Urban Saints. All agree it has been a stimulating yet challenging experience. In the Spring 2010 Jonathan and Felicity Green, who have led and developed “The Sanctuary” for four years, moved away from London and we record with gratitude their fine contribution and valuable work.

Another new venture, now in its third year, is “The Gathering”. Hosted by Revd. Tony Miles it is held on two or three Sunday evenings each year and attracts a congregation of up to 1,000 people. In November 2009 the theme was “Faith in the West End” with song, dance, testimony and interviews from stars in West End shows and from the West End Gospel Choir. At “The Gathering” in May 2010 the focus was “Revd. Dr. W.E. Sangster – the Man and his Message” to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death on Wesley Day 1960. His past was celebrated and the strength and power of his ministry was related to contemporary life.

The ministerial team appreciates the co-operation it receives from Premier Christian Radio. Revd. Martin Turner and Revd. Dr. Malcolm White have a twice weekly programme entitled “God's Healing Love”, whilst Revd. Tony Miles hosts the weekly Saturday morning programme entitled “The Big Breakfast”. In mid-December the church was privileged to have Premier Radio as joint hosts of Central Hall Carol Service which was then broadcast nationally at lunch-time on Christmas Day.

The above service was the last time the organ was used before being dismantled, hoisted onto scaffolding across the Great Hall, and lowered out through the windows onto lorries for its journey to Durham. A long-awaited overhaul and refurbishment, financed by the Managing Trustees, is being carried out there by Harrison and Harrison the organ builders. Despite the loss of the Great Hall organ for 18 months the choir and music in general continues to play a vital part in the life of Central Hall. Gerard Brooks, the Director of Music, has been joined by Craig Edwards as the Assistant Director of Music. They are drawing on small groups of instrumentalists to complement music on the piano and keyboard for services and events in the Great Hall.

## **Church-Related Events**

The Parliamentary Methodist Fellowship held its Covenant Service once again in January in the Church of St. Mary's Undercroft at the House of Commons. A congregation comprising Members of Parliament, Peers, members from the Central Hall, Managing Trustees, District and Connexional officers participated. Revd. Martin Turner preached and, as leader of the Fellowship, is seeing a number of its members retiring at the end of the Parliamentary session.

The Spring Festival Daffodil Day in March 2010 took as its theme "The Seven Ages of Life". Hosted by the Central Hall in collaboration with Women's Network, it attracted a congregation in excess of 2,100, the largest for many years. The Lord Mayor of Westminster attended bringing greetings from the City of Westminster. Guest speakers were Revd. Steven Wild, Chair of the Cornwall District; Sister Eluned Williams, (Action for Children); Gillian Pengelley, President of Women's Network; Pam Rhodes, (Methodist Homes for the Aged) and Steve Ford, Chief Executive of the Parkinson's Disease Society. The star was surely baby Alfred Moxon who at 3½ months took the stage with his mother, Benedicta, as the first Age of Life.

The annual conference in May on Prayer and Healing brought together attendees from the District, the U.K and abroad. Taking the theme "God's Heart for Healing – healing from the inside out" the sessions were led by Jonathan Clark, Head of Premier Life, the Community Unit at Premier Radio, assisted by Revd. Dr. Malcolm White and Revd. Martin Turner. A number of activities have taken place on the ecumenical front. The church was honoured to have as its preacher on a Sunday morning to celebrate Christian Unity, the Attorney General, Baroness Scotland. She, a Roman Catholic, explained she is the daughter of a life-long Methodist. The annual Good Friday march took place along Victoria Street with meditations outside the Central Hall and Westminster Cathedral followed by a final act of remembrance in Westminster Abbey. The St. Vincent's Family Project, established with the Roman Catholics, continues to grow in strength in the Community Suite at the Central Hall. This year a grant from Westminster City Council enabled the expansion of the project to a further space on the lower ground floor. The Project Manager has written in appreciation, "We are grateful for all the support we receive from the church community. You have provided us with premises, financial support and volunteers."

## **The Conference Centre**

The Conference Centre, under the leadership of Mr. Michael Sharp, the Managing Director, has not remained immune from the effects of the down-turn in the economy. Business has been more difficult to attract, clients have been reticent to commit themselves until much nearer the date of events, and discounting has needed to be very competitive. This bleak economic and trading situation, along with the closure of most of the letting spaces for several months for the re-installation of the organ, means that the immediate future (2010–11) will not be easy. It is likely to limit the amount of Gift Aid available to be transferred to the Trust. Even so during 2009–10 the Company has managed to hold its own against the competition of thirty conference venues in Central London, as Central Hall is still seen as a very desirable location. Thanks are due to the Managing Director, the Sales and Events team and all staff who give such high quality service and commitment. Awards have been received from Hospitality Assured with a score of 73% and Green Tourism in London with a score of 81% which is the gold standard.

The type of external organisations who choose to hire facilities at Central Hall is considerable, ranging from corporate and government departments to educational establishments and those with a religious or charitable affiliation.

During the year there have been many interesting lettings, for example the Department of Health, the World Nuclear Association, the Sorrell Foundation and Intelligent Squared. Central Hall also continues to be a popular venue for graduation ceremonies. A notable example of a charity letting was "Poetry for Haiti" organised at short notice, in which the Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, invited nineteen other leading poets to take part in a live event. The Prime Minister and his wife attended and all proceeds from ticket sales went to the Earthquake Appeal. 'Christians in

Government UK' held their carol service in the Great Hall with music provided by the Band of the Grenadier Guards and prayers led by Revd. Martin Turner. The Trustees are delighted to hold Connexional gatherings at Central Hall as well as having the London District Resource Centre located on the third floor.

Good maintenance of the premises has been a priority for the Company and minor improvements have been made throughout the building. In addition more major work has been carried out on external re-decoration of the ground floor, on refurbishing toilet areas, on providing pantries to meet Health and Safety requirements and enhancing the appearance of the Lecture Hall and Library. Other major projects must wait until a later date when specifications can be confirmed and financed.

### **New Facilities**

The Visitor Centre Suite off the Entrance Hall has taken a time to come to fruition, but the Visitor Services Manager/Archivist and his assistant are working towards its opening in the Summer 2010. This will be an excellent new facility.

The Trustees have accepted the historic collection of most of the books published by the Methodist Publishing House. The intention is that these will be on permanent display in the Susanna Wesley Gallery for the use of research scholars and other visitors. It is disappointing that the anticipated Connexional funding has not been forthcoming. In view of this the Trustees have made arrangements to finance this project supplemented by the use of donated equipment and the help of volunteers.

A memorial stained glass window to commemorate the work from 1878 to 1985 of the Action for Children's "Sisterhood" is to be removed from the Highbury Office of Action for Children and sited at the Central Hall. It will be located and illuminated on a wall at the entrance to the Chapel together with a cabinet of artefacts, thus being available for all to see.

### **Past and Future**

One is always aware of the past history, events and people who have contributed in all manner of ways to the Central Hall Westminster. The death in October 2009 of Revd. Dr. R. John Tudor, the Superintendent Minister from 1981 to 1995, was one such person whose ministry and influence was immeasurable. The last sermon he ever preached was at Central Hall in August 2009. A service of thanksgiving for his life was held in the Great Hall on Sunday afternoon, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2010, attended by family, Methodist friends and many others representing organisations and causes he espoused. An address by Revd. Paul Hulme encapsulated the enthusiasm, indomitable spirit and vision he brought to his ministry. As the service concluded a brief recorded extract of John's last sermon was played, and his final words rang out in the Central Hall:

"He will lift you up on eagles' wings.  
For that is our Faith.  
And to God be all the glory. Amen".

The year 2012 will have a special significance at the Methodist Central Hall Westminster for it was on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1912 that the Opening Ceremony and inaugural services took place of this great Wesley Memorial building. A steering committee is already planning a series of centenary events from October 2012 to October 2013, to make it a time of thanksgiving but also a year of opportunity for mission in the present age.

## **Retirements**

The Managing Trustees place on record their gratitude for their service to the Trustees who are retiring in August 2010:-

Rev. Dr. Stuart Burgess, Mr. Alan Clark, Mr. Dudley Coates, Rev. Dr. Malcolm White.

## **\*\*\* Resolutions**

**26/1. The Conference received the Report.**

**26/2. The Conference appointed the following Managing Trustees of the Conference Property at Central Hall Westminster:**

Revd Jenny Impey (Chair of the Managing Trustees and Convenor – ex officio), Revd Martin H Turner (Superintendent, London Westminster – ex officio), \*Mr. Tony Ackah-Yensu, †Revd Stuart Bell, ††Mrs Joan Broadhurst, \*Ms Angela Cobbina, Mr Ian Hume, Revd Dr Howard Mellor, \*Revd Anthony D Miles, Mr Alan Poole, Mr Richard Reeves, ††Ms Sarah Willison, †Miss Christine M Wykes, †Mr Henry Yentumi.

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

† Indicates Trustees who have served for 6 years or more.

## **Reasoned Statements**

Rev. Stuart Bell (2004) Wide connexional experience is much valued.

Mrs Joan Broadhurst (2000) M.A. Church link as Senior Circuit Steward and Secretary of Leadership Team.

Ms. Sarah Willison (2004) Professional qualification as a solicitor is an asset to the Trust on legal matters.

Miss Christine M Wykes (1999) M.A. Secretary of Managing Trustees. Wide experience and expertise sustains continuity.

Mr. Henry Yentumi (2004) Circuit experience in multi-ethnic urban setting is an asset.

## **New Trustees**

(To be added).