

39. Managing Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster

Contact name and details	The Revd Michaela A Youngson Chair of the Managing Trustees Michaela@methodistlondon.org.uk
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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 2019/2020. 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 over 11,000 visitors from all over the UK and 60 different countries around the world. All activities at the Hall have stopped with effect from mid-March due to COVID-19 – the successful performance of the conference and events business over the past two years has ensured that commercial loans and reserves are available to cover the anticipated period of closure.

Ministry of the Church

The team ministry has continued to thrive under the leadership of the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins. Dr Atkins completes his period as Superintendent Minister in July and, subject to the Conference, will be succeeded by the Revd Tony Miles, who has been a valuable member of the ministerial team at Central Hall for some years. The ministers are loyally supported by 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. 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 around 430, originating from almost every point of the globe, giving rise to the vision statement: 'A global Christian family following Jesus at the heart of London'.

The pastoral work of the church is led by Deacon Ali McMillan, who, since her appointment in 2019, has coordinated care for church members and those in the extended church family. Work amongst children and young people continues to flourish. All-Age worship services are a welcome feature of Sunday morning worship. 'The Sanctuary' - a creative contemporary worship service for young adults - meets on Thursdays and includes members who have volunteered to assist at a winter night shelter run by Westminster Churches Together. Tony Miles continues his valuable work in broadcasting, in both Christian and mainstream media.

The Healing Prayer Ministry is now under the leadership of Ms Alison Bryan and continues to be an important part of the life at Central Hall and is valued by the many who attend. As well as regular monthly services, an annual Healing Conference is held at the Hall, though the May 2020 event has had to be postponed.

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The Trust and Church work closely to support the St Vincent's Family Project, which meets within the Hall premises, as does the Parkinson's drop-in project. The church is also involved in various local projects including the Westminster Churches Winter Night Shelter, 'The Passage' (a charity helping homeless people) and the Westminster Foodbank.

Chaplaincy continues to play an important part of the work, with Martyn Atkins sustaining and creating pastoral links with Members and workers in the Palace of Westminster, Tony Miles with the media, and Ali McMillan 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.

The Conference Centre

Mr Paul Southern, Managing Director, leads the conference centre team working 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 2019 was financially very successful, with a record turnover of £9.0m for the conference business. The company spent £605,000 on refurbishments and improvements in addition to a contribution of £1.5m to the Trustees.

The conference centre team is working to develop 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. Together with our onsite production partner, we have invested heavily in making Central Hall one of the most technically capable venues in the UK.

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

- The PiXL Club (Partners in Excellence): the team delivers in the region of 20 large events for this not-for-profit partnership of almost 3,000 schools who come together to share best practice and raise standards;
- Corporate clients including an IT event from the USA, an Arabic concert and a Chinese company AGM;
- Charitable events at discounted rates including Channel 4's *Stand Up to Cancer* and, in September, The Royal Armouries' *100 Days to Peace* concert in aid of Help for Heroes, Combat Stress, and Heads Together;
- 2019 finished off with the BBC's New Year's Eve concert featuring Craig David.

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All events are judged against ethical criteria. Proposed events have been rejected from organisations promoting violence, alcohol, tobacco or other subjects conflicting with Methodist principles and/or Standing Orders. Central Hall and our onsite partners have been *London Living Wage* employers since 2013 and have extended the ethical approach to environmental issues and attained Gold level for green tourism, with the ability to calculate the carbon footprint for each event and then give the client a choice of ways to offset it. The dedicated 'green team' continues to work to reduce the amount of electricity used within this large building. Lighting is now 100% LED and the team endeavours to use only sustainable products. Working closely with Westminster Council has seen an increase in recycling activity: all staff and service partners are trained in waste disposal and no waste now goes to landfill.

The Building

The building continues to be in good order. Maintaining a building of the status and complexity of Central Hall is a constant challenge and the Trustees are committed to an effective and efficient programme of maintenance and refurbishment. The past year's projects have included updating the rest of the toilets, refreshing the wood block flooring on the third floor, painting the Lecture Hall and Library, and installing new blinds. Digital signage has been installed throughout the building which will make the venue look and feel more professional and reduce paper waste.

In addition, the makeover of the Chapel has been completed and has been fully utilised by the Church and a number of other users.

The Trustees

The Trustees were pleased to see their Chair, Revd Michaela Youngson, return from her year as President of the Methodist Conference for 2018/2019. Michaela was then on sabbatical in early 2020 and the Revd Graham Thompson acted as Deputy Chair for this period.

The Nominations Committee continues to work to ensure that the trustee body includes committed individuals with relevant skills and experience, particularly in the areas of finance, legal affairs, heritage architecture and Methodist mission, along with appropriate diversity in its membership.

COVID-19

The building has been closed for church and business events since mid-March. Most staff have been put on furlough under the Government's Job Retention Scheme, with all receiving their full basic wage. Two members of staff are on site to ensure the Hall is kept in excellent condition with cleaning, inspection and routine servicing ongoing under rigorous guidelines.

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Actions taken after detailed financial planning with several scenarios have ensured that the Company and Trust have adequate cashflow into mid-2021.

The Future

The Sunday congregation continues to flourish and the community engagement of the Church demonstrates Methodist commitment to an outward oriented mission, with God's love at its heart. The business went into the COVID-19 crisis in a strong position, with many clients returning and new clients being added, with some booking two and three years in advance – this success means that resources are available for the Trustees to fulfil their mission.

The Trustees ensure that both Church and Company operate within their means financially. A percentage of any surplus on Trust income is passed to the 'Twenty-first Century Fund' which is to be developed for social needs.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

39/1. The Conference adopts the Report.

39/2. The Conference appoints the following Managing Trustees of the Conference Property at Central Hall Westminster:

- # The Revd Michaela Youngson (Chair of the Managing Trustees and Convenor – ex officio)
The Revd Anthony D Miles (subject to the Conference, Superintendent, London Westminster – ex officio)
Mr Nevil Tomlinson (Treasurer to the Trustees)
- # Mr David Morgan (Secretary to the Trustees)
- * Mrs Ama Ackah-Yensu
- # Mr Kojo Amoah-Arko
Mr Joseph Anoom
Ms Ruby Beech
- * Mr Michael Davies
Mr Alan Eccles CBE
Mr Martin Lougher
- * Ms Genevieve Patnelli
- * Ms Grace Sangmuah
Dr Joanna Williamson

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

Indicates Trustees who have served for 6 years or more

Reasoned Statements for Trustees who have exceeded six years of service

The Revd Michaela A Youngson is a Chair of the London District

Mr Kojo Amoah-Arko – Chartered Accountant – provides valued financial input.

The Revd Anthony D Miles – Deputy Superintendent Minister – excellent overview of many areas of the Hall's activity. Will become an ex officio member if appointment as Superintendent Minister is confirmed by the Conference.

Mr David Morgan – has served as Secretary of Trustees since 2013 – will ensure continuity by giving one further year as a Trustee in light of the disruption of activities by COVID-19.

New Trustees

Mr Alan Eccles CBE – recently retired Public Guardian of England and Wales, Chief Executive of Government Executive Agency and Senior Civil Servant. Experienced leader of operational delivery organisations and served in various positions at Board level. Current Charity Trustee and Methodist Local Preacher.