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Open letter to all Methodist treasurers

23 October 2020

Dear Methodist treasurers,

**Regarding: examples of attempted fraud via the Royal Mail**

We write to make you aware that there have been several recent instances of attempted fraud which have come to light concerning cheques sent by post to the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church and also withdrawal slips sent to us via the same method.

In the first instance, a cheque sent by post by a local Methodist Church to the Central Finance Board was intercepted at some point in its journey. It never reached the offices of the CFB. The payee and amount were altered and the fraudster attempted to pay the cheque into an account which was unrelated to Methodism or the Church concerned. Fortunately, it was blocked at the banking stage and no money was lost.

In the second example, a Church treasurer sent two CFB Deposit Fund withdrawal slips to the Central Finance Board offices by signed for post. The original letter containing the withdrawal slips never arrived. Several days later, a letter arrived containing two withdrawal slips which had been altered asking for withdrawals to be made to unrelated 3<sup>rd</sup> parties. These were not processed as the CFB does not pay away amounts to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties outside of Methodism. The City of London Police and Action Fraud have been notified as appropriate and we are following up with the Royal Mail Fraud Team currently.

It is vital that Methodist treasurers and those sending cheques and withdrawal requests to the CFB or the Connexional Team Finance Department are vigilant at all times. The advice we would give would be as follows.

**Central Finance Board**

- Wherever possible, ask donors or other remitters to send money direct to the relevant church's bank account (or CFB account) by bank transfer.
- Where cheques are destined for CFB accounts, pay the cheques in via a local HSBC branch using the CFB Deposit Fund paying in book rather than sending the cheque(s) by post.
- Where cheques are sent to the CFB by post, keep a copy of the cheque(s) sent and follow through to check these show up on the relevant CFB Deposit Fund statement. Make cheques payable to 'The Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church' rather than the 'CFB' as this is harder for someone to alter. Where these do not show up within a reasonable amount of time, contact Janice Thomson at the CFB on 020 7496 3627 to make her aware of cheques sent but not credited.

- Where requests to transfer funds out of a CFB account are made, follow these through to ensure that the funds arrive safely as requested. Withdrawal requests can also be scanned and emailed rather than posted via Royal Mail.

### **Connexional Team Finance Department**

- Online transfer directly to the MCF bank account using electronic banking. This may not be possible for all treasurers if they don't have dual authorisation facility for electronic payments.
- Pay the cheques using HSBC branches. We provide paying in books to the treasurers to bank the cheques in the local HSBC branch. Please contact the Finance Team if you need one.
- If the above options are not available to you and you have to send a cheque by post, please follow these steps to increase security:
  - complete the payee name fully (writing the full name make it harder to alter);
  - avoid spaces on the cheque (draw a line through unused spaces on the cheque);
  - ensure that the cheque is not visible through the envelope i.e. fold a piece of paper or card over the cheque, and
  - check your bank statement regularly

It is vital that all are vigilant so that churches and other parts of Methodism do not fall victim to crime. Thank you for your attention to this letter and if we can help in any other way please do not hesitate to let us know.

Yours sincerely,



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The Central Finance Board of the  
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Director of Finance & Resources  
The Connexional Team