

9. Managing Trustees of Central Hall Westminster

1. Introduction

This report from the Managing Trustees gives an overview of the many varied activities and events which have taken place at the Methodist Central Hall Westminster during 2008-09. Looking back through the year it is gratifying to reflect on ways in which the Mission and Ministry of Central Hall has reached out to a widely diverse local community in London and the South East, and also to thousands of visitors nationally and internationally.

2. Ministry of the Church

The Church at Central Hall is at the heart of mission under the team leadership of The Revd Martin Turner. On Sunday mornings the Great Hall is the meeting place for a large congregation sharing in worship with challenging preaching. The service is traditional in nature but draws on contemporary songs and presentations including All Age Worship quarterly. Evening worship in the Chapel includes a monthly service of healing and Holy Communion. The pastoral work of the church is often demanding and widely spread, but thanks to the ministry of Sister Jane Middleton and her pastoral lay helpers, many needs are met. In 2008 a loyal Honorary Associate Minister, The Revd Beryl Lucas died, and the church places on record its gratitude for her distinguished ministry. It is a privilege to have The Revd Gordon Newton giving support to the team as an Honorary Associate Minister.

The Revd Tony Miles, as part of his media ministry, has become Chaplain to Premier

Christian Radio and also has a five hour weekly programme on Saturday mornings entitled "The Big Breakfast". He, along with The Revd Martin Turner, The Revd Dr Malcolm White and Mrs Ollie McEwen, are involved in a new fifteen minute afternoon programme broadcast twice weekly on Premier entitled "God's Healing Love". Not only is this ministry valuable in its own right but it also serves to attract many occasional visitors to Central Hall. This is particularly notable at "The Gathering" led by The Revd Tony Miles on three Sunday evenings each year with a congregation approaching a thousand people. In October 2008 the theme was "When Life is Tough ... You Carry Us" with international guest presenters sharing songs and stories to inspire. "The Gathering" in March 2009 was in the form of a 'Big Sing' with the choir singing excerpts from "Messiah" interspersed with hymns, drama and interviews to mark the 250th anniversary of Handel's death.

Music has always played an important role at Central Hall and the Managing Trustees are pleased to be able to finance the long awaited overhaul and refurbishment of the Great Hall organ scheduled for 2010-11. The Directors of Music Mr Gerard Brooks and Mr Mark Stringer have given a great deal of expertise and commitment to the musical life of the church. In the spring of 2009 Mr Stringer resigned following promotion in his work-place involving frequent long-distance travel. The church paid tribute to his fine service. Mr Brooks continues as Director of Music and a new appointment of an Assistant Director is being made.

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The accreditation of four members as Local Preachers has been a cause for rejoicing. So too the entry into membership of more than thirty new members. A fellowship of those in the 18 to 40 year old age range, "The Sanctuary", continues to grow in strength and influence. Mr Jonathan Green leads the group with skill and imagination. Of the 100 or so young adults involved in "The Sanctuary", a number have joined small groups with each group having a focus such as Gospel Music, Worship and Music, Hospitality and Engaging in Spiritual Discipline. Social Justice Projects have also developed such as "Open Door Meals" to those without a permanent home and "The Besom Project" of gardening and house painting in the community. This year £3,000 has been donated by "The Sanctuary" to six charities.

3. Church-Related Events

The Spring Festival Daffodil Day, hosted by the Central Hall and Women's Network, is an annual event which attracts 2,000 people. The theme in 2009 was "The Earth is the Lord's" – an opportunity to reflect on the state of the environment. The Lord Mayor of Westminster attended to bring greetings from the City of Westminster. Main speakers were The Revd Steve Wild, Chair of the Cornwall District, Mrs Judith Simms, Connexional President of Women's Network and The Revd David Bookless, Director of A-Rocha UK, part of a Christian environmental movement with projects in 18 countries. An annual conference each May on Prayer and Healing has been established by

The Revd Dr Malcolm White with several hundred attendees from the District, from the UK and abroad. 'Holiness and Healing' was the theme in 2009 led by The Revd David Collinson from Alnwick.

On the ecumenical front the church was greatly honoured by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey inviting The Revd Martin Turner to join the College of Westminster Abbey. This is indicative of the way in which the relationship between the Abbey and Central Hall has deepened. It was also a privilege to have the Dean, the Very Revd Dr John Hall, preach at Central Hall on the Sunday of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The St. Vincent's Family Project – a Roman Catholic initiated project – continues to grow in the newly created Community Suite at Central Hall. Methodist volunteers provide help in the project which supports vulnerable families in the local community.

4. The Conference Centre

Mr Michael Sharp, the Managing Director, has made great efforts to ensure that the sales team of the Conference Centre maximizes opportunities to market the facilities of Central Hall. This is set against the back-drop of a most serious time in the nation's economy and the Conference Centre has not remained immune. Experience has taught that commercial lets have been rather more difficult to secure, but the sales team has been enterprising in using flexible approaches to pricing always supported by high quality levels of service.

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The variety of organizations and groups who have chosen to hire facilities at Central Hall has largely been sustained. Government Departments, the IT sector and business institutions favour the Central Hall for its strategic location and types of accommodation available throughout the building. A three day conference of 660 Chinese business people and an international 'Leaders in London Conference' were particularly notable – the latter having such high profile speakers as Rudy Giuliani, the former Mayor of New York and Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel Prize winner. On one day in February Central Hall was featured in the media in relation to two headline news stories. In the Great Hall the 10th anniversary of the Lawrence Report was held with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police as a main speaker, whilst in the Lecture Hall post office workers were vigorously debating policy and directions of the Royal Mail.

From a different perspective international folk stars, Sigur Ros, drew a capacity audience in the Great Hall. Another memorable event was a special televised edition of BBC's Question Time dedicated to young people, and hosted by David Dimbleby. The programme went out live and was viewed by 2.6 million people, this being the largest audience ever for Question Time. Following this was a full day's debate at Central Hall on issues affecting young people hosted by Huw Edwards.

The building is frequently the venue for events related to charities, for example the Parkinson's Disease Society held

their Carol Concert there for the first time hosted by Jane Asher. Likewise 'Christians in Government UK' made their first visit for their Carol Service. The Band of the Grenadier Guards provided the music and the preacher was the Archbishop of York, the Most Revd Dr John Sentamu. Prayers were led by The Revd Martin Turner and the readers included Mr Jack Straw, the Justice Minister, and Ms Caroline Spelman, the Conservative Party Chair. The year 2008 marked 60 years in the life of Methodist Homes for the Aged. The celebratory gathering at Central Hall, attended by many Methodists and others from London and the South East, was a time of learning about new developments as well as reflecting on the remarkable contribution of M.H.A through the years. The children's charity Action for Children met at Central Hall to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their "Articulation Project" in which young people develop self-confidence and awareness through the Arts.

The Managing Trustees are always pleased to have Methodist Connexional gatherings at Central Hall and this year the newly configured Connexional Team held their inaugural service and reception on the premises. The London District Resource Centre located on the 3rd floor also uses Central Hall for District events such as Synod, circuit stewards' conferences and various committees.

5. Visitor Centre

The Visitor Centre off the Entrance Hall is nearing completion and will be an excellent resource. Mr Paul Moynihan took up the

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post of Visitor Services Manager/Archivist in February 2009 and is supported by Mr Mervyn Appleby as Assistant.

The unique and fascinating Walter Tull Exhibition was held there in late 2008. Walter Tull, noted as the first black officer in the British Army, was formerly an NCH boy and thus had links with Methodism. The Trustees have accepted the Methodist Publishing House Book Collection – a copy of most books published in the past 150 years – and these will be an important permanent display in the Susanna Wesley Gallery for the use of scholars and other visitors.

6. Future Priorities

The Chair of the Managing Trustees, The Revd Jenny Impey, has led and encouraged the Trust to develop clear plans for future priorities. A small working party convened by Mr Dudley Coates is giving attention to the manner in which Central Hall can best respond to needs within the Connexion and the London District. A second phase of refurbishment is being planned for 2010-11 involving completion of work on

the Great Hall and major re-design of the Lower Ground Floor. Any work undertaken will be met from financial resources within the Trust and Conference Centre Trading Company. The hope and intention will be completion for the year 2012 – the Olympic Games year when London anticipates vast numbers of visitors. But for the Methodist Central Hall Westminster **2012** also has a special importance – it is the Centenary Year of this great mission centre and building of world significance. The Managing Trustees offer thanks for all that has passed and trust for all that God has in store.

7. Retirements

The Managing Trustees place on record their gratitude for their service to Trustees who are retiring in August 2009:

Mr Jacob Baiden, Ms Ruby Beech and Ms Sarah Middleton

Also they wish to thank Mr Richard Ratcliffe, the Archivist at Central Hall, who retired in February 2009.

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***RESOLUTIONS

- 9/1.** The Conference adopted the Report.
- 9/2.** 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, ¥Revd Dr Stuart Burgess, ¥Mr Alan Clarke, Mr Dudley Coates, *Ms Angela Cobbina, Mr Ian Hume, Revd Dr Howard Mellor, Mr Alan Poole, Mr Richard Reeves, ¥*Revd Dr Malcolm White, *Ms Sarah Willison, ¥Miss Christine M Wykes, Mr Henry Yentumi.

*Indicates the people nominated by the Westminster Circuit Meeting.

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

†Indicates new Trustee.

Reasoned Statements

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

Revd Dr Stuart Burgess (2000) Wide connexional experience is much valued.

Mr Alan Clarke (1998) DipEE, C.Eng, MIEE, MCIBSE, MSLL
Professional skills needed.

Revd Dr Malcolm White (2001)
Ministerial contribution is much valued.

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

New Trustee – Supporting Statement

Mr Tony Ackah-Yensu Accountant. Treasurer of the Methodist Church at Central Hall.