

South West Cumbria United Area Trustees' Annual Report (September 2019 – August 2020)

To borrow from football, 2019-20 has definitely been a year of two halves; one in which new and unexpected challenges were added to the ones we usually face.

The United Area's year started in grand style, hosting Cumbria Methodist Autumn Synod at Beacon Hill. There was a real 'buzz' about the day, as all our forward planning culminated in an interesting and smooth-running event when we worshipped together, learned a lot, met old friends and made a new one – James Tebbutt, our new District Chair. Even the weather was on our side, with some delegates choosing to eat their lunch outside in the glorious sunshine, and everyone's journeys made that bit more pleasant.

Staffing was a significant theme for the Trustees this year. We knew that we would lose Deacon Debbie in July, but that financial constraints would not allow us to replace her. We devoted some time to exploring ecumenical possibilities for Millom, but nothing came to fruition. Zena went before the District panel again in February which, after reviewing another set of very positive reports and congratulating her on all her hard work, decided to recommend her for ordination at Conference in June. Before her departure, Sarah Moore shared the URC's vision for the deployment of presbyters in Cumbria, with one based in Barrow, and so an 'opportunity for ministry' was advertised, with the idea that an incoming URC minister would take on most of Jenet's duties after her retirement. After some initial interest, this has sadly not led to a candidate coming forward, though we hope that this may still happen. In the meantime, we have turned our attention to the Methodist stationing process, and a key task for the summer has been writing the profile. In conjunction with this, we felt that it was important to update the UA website, so work has been continuing to that end. The profile, prepared by the Invitation Committee, aims to present a positive but honest picture of the UA and our hopes for the future. On paper, we look good; *but let us all bear in mind that we must also endeavour to live up to the image we have presented.*

Property is an ongoing theme for the Trustees and this year it has been mainly about manses. Having taken the decision to sell the Park Drive manse, a number of us rolled up our sleeves to empty and clean the house and blitz the overgrown garden. Despite a few months' delay in the spring, we have been able to sell the manse in August for more than the asking price which means that, eventually, we will have money available to use for mission. We can only hope and pray for similar success with the Millom manse in the autumn. Although getting the Barrow manse ready for sale was a team effort, special thanks must go to our treasurer, Lynne, for her ongoing work and patience in dealing with solicitors, surveyors and estate agents on our behalf. The Trustees grew by one in September, when Charlie Mills answered the call for new members. We still unfortunately do not have any URC representation; but Rev Martin Coe of South Lakes has agreed to represent URC interests when he is available next year.

A major focus for Methodism this year was 'God In Love Unites Us', the URC having had their discussions earlier. The Church approached this very sensitively and we were offered sermons and, potentially, workshops on a range of topics under this banner; but same sex relationships and marriage was always going to be the most contentious issue. At the beginning of 2020, members read a booklet outlining the theological aspects of both sides of the argument, then attended forums led by visiting facilitators where we could vote. The tone of the discussion in the forums was pleasing; and even where members disagreed, they did it graciously and respectfully. There was a further opportunity to vote at the Area meeting in early March, in the knowledge that our views would be represented at Synod and later at Conference...

... And then, a couple of weeks later, we entered a new world. Lockdown brought an abrupt end to many aspects of church life, at least in their usual form. Going to church on Sunday, coffee mornings, the many weekly meetings, fundraising events, outside groups using our premises: it all came to a halt. Health issues and the age profile of our congregations meant that many members were in the 'high risk' category and remained in isolation for several months, leaving them vulnerable to loneliness. While we all know of the cruelties meted out by Covid-19, we should also consider the blessings, the first being that, by God's grace, none of our members has died from this disease. We have often wished to see more of God's love in our community, so we should feel uplifted by the care and concern shown by people for neighbours they hardly knew previously and for the new appreciation and respect for key workers.

Our ministers spent a lot of time, especially at the beginning, checking in on members to make sure that they had the help and support they needed. This pastoral care was taken forward, and rightly so, by church communities, where different ways to keep in touch included newsletters, phone calls, emails and doorstep visits. For members on the periphery, this has proved particularly beneficial, as the one-to-one contact has led to deeper conversations and the chance to get to know each other better. Thanks to Covid-19, we now have Zoom! Zoom has been used for all sorts of things, from Sunday School to Bible study and meetings of all kinds; and technology in general has proved a useful tool and a good friend, at least when it has behaved itself! We were even able to watch Zena make her promises to Conference online and share in a District Zoom service of celebration: nice for us, though no real substitute for the planned ordination service in Shrewsbury for Zena. Our ministers were quick to initiate alternative ways to worship – the home worship sheets, the Sunday service and Thursday's Pause and Pray on Facebook – meaning that no one was left out. Feedback on all of these has been excellent and we know that these alternative ways to worship have also reached people who would not have been in church on a Sunday, thus providing an effective form of outreach. Other forms of outreach have had to adapt. The monthly Sunday dinner at Millom, for example, has continued, but is being delivered. Many of our normal charitable events have been postponed, though it should be noted that we reached our target of £5,000 for Christian Aid and that money, multiplied by 17, will be going to the project in Kenya. With the charity shop closed and other activities on hold, Sophie and Tim dedicated themselves to the Community Hub at Hartington Street, providing food and other essentials to people in need in that community.

James Tebbutt has talked about us emerging from 'a period of darkness', so let us think about the rays of light that we can now see. Looking back, what has happened is that we have embraced change, creatively, and it has been beneficial. We are working in ways that we wouldn't have imagined this time last year. While we can rejoice in the shared (masked and socially distanced) fellowship of returning to church, the Preaching Plan has been devised to incorporate the new ways to worship, with a SWCUA YouTube channel coming soon. Local preachers are contributing to all of the above. We often worry about decline and assume that change will be negative, but clearly this need not be so. We forget that the Church through the centuries has seen many changes, sometimes growth, sometimes decline, but then regeneration. When our church at Broughton closed several years ago, the members felt a mixture of sadness and relief: sadness for the loss of their home church and the shared history, but relief that the shrinking congregation would no longer have the burden of the building. Since then, the members have been welcomed into other congregations and we are working with other Christians to turn the building into a centre for work with children and young people in the village, hopefully nurturing the young Christians of the future. So, at the end of 2019/20, let us start the new church year with hope, trust in God and a commitment to turn our faith into actions.

Please pray for:

- Hayley Edmondson and Sophie Carnaby have both expressed their intention to candidate for ministry. They face a challenging and rigorous application process and we pray that God will guide their steps.
- Deacon Debbie Harkness begins her posting in the Bolton area. We wish her well and pray that she will find her new diaconal work interesting and fulfilling.
- As we submit the profile for a new Methodist presbyter and Superintendent minister, we pray that God's hand will guide the process and bring the right person forward.
- We pray for Jennet in her final year of ministry with us. We pray for her health and wellbeing and that God will be her strong support as she approaches retirement.

SECTION A			Un - restricted Funds	Circuit Model Trust Fund	Restricted Funds	Totals this year	Totals last year
		Note	£	£	£	£	£
a1	RECEIPTS						
a2	Assessment/Share		110,938			110,938	137,712
a3	Capital receipts			223,703		223,703	
a4	Bank and CFB interest and Investment income		597	129		726	994
a5	Grants				18,000	18,000	40,533
a6	Other receipts		22,986		300	23,287	38,645
a7	TOTAL RECEIPTS		134,521	223,833	18,300	376,654 (a8)	217,885

SECTION B							
b1	PAYMENTS						
b2	Stipends, salaries, NIC, Pension and travel costs		112,877		300	113,178	131,801
b3	Manse Costs		12,226			12,226	25,451
b4	Administration etc		4,985	27		5,012	5,209
b5	District Assessment		30,374	617		30,991	32,147
b6	Grants & donations		1,570			1,570	2,000
b7							
b8	Other payments		8,944	69,481	23,166	101,591	24,630
b9	TOTAL PAYMENTS		170,976	70,126	23,466	264,568 (b9)	221,237

SECTION C							
c1	NET RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR	(a7-b9)	(36,455)	153,706	(5,166)	112,086	(3,353)
c2	Total funds brought forward from last year		211,785	12,274	5,166	229,224 (c6)	232,577
c3	Sub total	(c1+c2)	175,330	165,981		341,311	229,224
c4	Transfers and adjustments		(3,327)			(3,327) (c7)	
c5	TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR	(c3+c4)	172,002.90	165,981		337,984 (c8)	229,224 (c6)

SECTION D						
d	FOR INFORMATION ONLY: MONEY RECEIVED AND PASSED ON TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS (these amounts should not be included in total receipts/payments above)					
d1	Balance brought forward from last year					1,699
d2	Offerings/Gifts - received for external organisations				9,921	2,779
d3	Offerings/Gifts - passed to external organisations				9,921	4,478
d4	BALANCE STILL TO BE PAID (d1 + d2 - d3)					

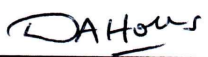
Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act;
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.
- (3) I have not obtained independent verification of all investments with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes ("TMCP") or held in other Trusts, Bank balances and Funds at the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church ("CFB"), which are individually in excess of £10,000 (ten thousand pounds) at the balance sheet date.

Name	David Hollis
Signature	
Relevant Professional qualification or body	FMAAT
Address	119 Birchwood Drive, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 9NY
Date	11TH FEBRUARY 2021