

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE

England & Wales · Charity number 1169562

Details

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2016-10-10

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Collaboration House
77-79 Charlotte Street
London
W1T 4PW

Phone 0203 970 0709

Email info@religionmediacentre.org.uk

Website www.religionmediacentre.org.uk

Activities

Objects: TO ADVANCE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN WORLD RELIGION, INCLUDING THE BAHA'I FAITH; BUDDHISM; CHRISTIANITY; HINDUISM; ISLAM; JAINISM; JUDAISM; SIKHISM AND ZOROASTRIANISM BY: THE DISSEMINATION OF ACCURATE, AUTHORITATIVE, INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL INFORMATION AND RESEARCH ABOUT RELIGIOUS FAITHS TO THE MEDIA; AND THE PROVISION OF MEDIA TRAINING TO RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS.

Activities: Providing information to journalists on stories about religion, including research briefings and access to reputable sources of expertise and a range of informed opinion on a particular topic. Offering events where people connected with stories about religion engage and discuss issues with journalists. Providing religious literacy training to journalists and media training to religious leaders.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Sponsors Or Undertakes Research, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body
- **What:** Education/training, Religious Activities, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity
- **Who:** People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£126,217	£126,889	-	-
2024-03-31	£84,587	£157,589	-	-
2023-03-31	£133,360	£120,711	-	-
2022-03-31	£120,560	£114,723	-	-
2021-03-31	£128,500	£136,246	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
MICHAEL PAUL WAKELIN	Chair	2016-10-10
BENEDICT SAMUEL RICH		2016-10-10
Dr Hassan Abdein		2023-03-27
Dr Lois Lee		2020-11-26
KEVIN JAQUISS		2017-03-29
Roger Bolton		2019-06-27

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England & Wales - Charity number 1169562

Accounts

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2025

Registered Charity Number

1169562

Address

Collaboration House
77-79 Charlotte Street
London
W1T 4PW

Trustees

	<u>Date appointed</u>
Mr Benedict Samuel Rich	10 th October 2016
Rev Christopher Landau	10 th October 2016 (resigned 13 th March 2025)
Mr Michael Wakelin (chair)	10 th October 2016
Mr Kevin Jaquiss	29 th March 2017
Roger Bolton	27 th June 2019
Dr Lois Lee	26 th November 2020
Dr Hassan Abdein	27 th March 2023
Prof Opinderjit Kaur Takhur	1 st July 2024

Accountant

Andrew Jennings MA FCA

Independent Examiner

Mr Keith Halstead MA (Oxon) FCA

Bank

Cooperative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

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Trustees Report

The trustees are pleased to present the annual report of the Religion Media Centre from 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025.

1. Governance

The Religion Media Centre is a Charitable Incorporated Organization, charity number 1169562, registered on 10th October 2016.

Its constitution states its objects are: 'To advance education of the public in world religion, including the Baha'i faith; Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam; Jainism; Judaism; Sikhism and Zoroastrianism by: the dissemination of accurate, authoritative, independent and impartial information and research about religious faiths to the media; and the provision of media training to religious organisations.'

It is an impartial and independent organisation aiming to help the media report and understand religion and beliefs. It has no editorial line, nor does it promote any one religion, or religious belief in general. Instead, it exists to provide accurate, timely and relevant information to the media, enabling the public to be better informed.

The trustees have met six times during the year. The Rev Dr Christopher Landau, a founding trustee, resigned on 13 March 2025 in order to take on other commitments in the Church of England, and left with thanks for his work in getting the Religion Media centre off the ground.

Our Trustees are responsible for compliance with charity law and with the RMC's charitable objectives. They set the RMC's strategic direction, oversee its work, monitor progress and prioritise the RMC's activities. They support the team of consultants and freelancers who work on projects and content; monitor and supervise fund raising initiatives and advise on marketing.

Our advisory board provide advice on content and governance issues. Their names are listed in full on our website here <https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/governance/>

We review our safeguarding and data management policies annually. We are registered with the Independent Commissioners Office for data protection.

We evaluate our impact against KPIs measuring engagement on all social media platforms, with statistics given to trustees at each meeting. We keep our strategic objectives under review, responding to budgetary controls, changing media landscape and skills to respond.

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2. Activities, achievements and performance:

Editorial

We continued to provide daily news bulletins of news about religion, a weekly roundup of news, factsheets, explainers, timelines, weekly zoom media briefings and original journalism from our team of freelance journalists - Rosie Dawson, Tim Wyatt, Andrew Brown, Catherine Pepinster, Amardeep Bassey, Lianne Kolirin and new recruit Maira Butt, who is funded by the Aziz Foundation to report on Muslims in Britain.

Among the headline stories covered this year:

- April 2024: Opening of the world's first Sikh Court in London
- May 2024: The United Methodist Church finally held its conference, delayed because of Covid, and took a decision to reverse its assertion that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" and affirm same sex marriage.
- July 2024: General election sees Labour winning by a large majority, promising key role for faith communities in its programme
- July 2024: Church of England general synod endorsed plans for stand-alone services of blessing for same-sex couples, which led to calls for a new parallel province for those who disagree
- August 2024: The Olympics opening ceremony in Paris causes outrage for a tableau parodying Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*
- August 2024: summer riots in more than 20 cities and towns following the murder of three little girls at a dance class, cause widespread concern on breakdown of social cohesion
- October 2024: One year anniversary of the 7 October Hamas attack on Israel
- October 2024: Kim Leadbeater MP introduced Assisted Dying bill into the Commons, sparking contentious debate and opposition from many religious leaders
- November 2024: US presidential election sees Donald Trump return to the White House, with both political parties courting votes from religious groups
- November 2024: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, resigned after the Makin Review criticised his handling of abuse allegations against John Smyth
- January 2025: 80th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust and the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp
- January 2025: Bishop of Liverpool John Perumbalath retires following allegations of inappropriate behaviour against two women, which he denied
- February 2025: Church of England general synod stopped short of transferring all church safeguarding functions to an external organisation
- February 2025: British Muslim Network launched to represent Muslims in dialogue with the UK government.

3. Events

We continued holding regular media zoom briefings covering all the main stories listed above, where a panel explained the story in the news providing context and background. Our briefings reached three times the number of people compared to the previous year. Our speakers include university academics, authors, faith leaders and teachers. We collaborated with other organisations such as the National Churches Trust and the think tank Theos, to provide these events. We record the

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briefings for our YouTube channel and they are made into podcasts, with our audience increasing by 70 per cent. All the sessions are produced by Oliver Bowring from Musicarta Ltd.

Our annual lecture entitled "Faith's Place in Labour's Mission of National Renewal," was delivered by Sir Stephen Timms MP on 19 September 2024 at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London. He repeated the new government's intention to work with faith organisations to deliver outcomes for people, highlighting their role in the Covid-19 pandemic and the importance of "faith covenants," agreements between local councils and faith organizations, which facilitate collaboration in community support and service delivery.

We did not put on a festival this year but are planning our sixth festival for 9th June 2025 at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster.

4. The Creating Connections Project

With generous funding from the Saltley Trust, we put on another Creating Connections event, bringing together local faith groups and the media, in Wolverhampton. For the first time, our venue was a football club – Wolverhampton Wanderers – and a keynote speaker was Dal Darroch, the Football Association's Head of Diversity and Inclusion. This was our twelfth Creating Connections event, around 60 people attended including local journalists, faith leaders, local councillors, RE teachers, academics and those interested in religion in the public square. Once more, local faith groups put forward great stories for the media to follow up. 80 per cent said the event made them more willing to engage with the media than before. Our next project aim is to put on events in Cardiff and Bangor, and following that Scotland and Northern Ireland.

6. Impact and communications

There has been a significant increase in reach across all our social media channels this year, as the RMC reaches its targeted audience.

Our total reach has risen 12 per cent on the previous year, from 1 million to 1.13 million.

- Dramatic website page views increase: 168,000 to 270,000
- Unique website users increased from 124,000 to 200,000
- YouTube views more than doubled: 96,000 to just shy of 200,000
- RMC Briefing reach tripled: 56,000 to 154,000
- Our newsletters on Mailchimp with the daily news bulletin, weekly roundup and information on our briefings, continued to grow with sign-ups increasing by a third, and high engagement
- We have increased our presence on Linked In with the number of followers increasing by 25 per cent over the last year
- On Facebook, impressions have doubled.

This year we have been mentioned by the Sunday programme on BBC Radio 4, The Times, the Church Times, the Press Association, Premier Christian News, The Independent, the Washington Times, the Church of England Newspaper, The Standard, Express and Star in the past year. All the national religious affairs correspondents regularly take and build on our content from daily news

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bulletins and regular zoom briefings. Stories about the world's first Sikh Court, reaction to the Archbishop of Canterbury's resignation and retirement of the Bishop of Liverpool created most impact. We have also found a niche audience among interfaith campaigners, RE teachers and academics. We continued to engage Musicarta Ltd to increase our presence on all social media channels, versioning our material on each platform, enabling a steady increase in support.

Journalists have engaged with us through all our activities. We include them as panellists on our briefings, they regularly read and use stories from the daily bulletin. Media inquiries seeking ideas for commentators have increased as we become more well known.

7. Training

One of our successes this year was a series of training events for journalism students on "Reporting race and religion", presented by Amardeep Bassej and produced by Liz Harris. Courses were put on at the university of East Anglia; Goldsmiths, University of London; News Associates in London and Manchester; and Liverpool College. In total, 150 students and their teachers engaged in this conversation, and we are aiming to roll out more of this training next year.

We have also delivered media training to leaders in the Methodist church, the URC, the Church of England and to leaders of Jewish, Christian and Muslim organisations on the Faith in Leadership programme. Our training team is our executive chairman Michael Wakelin, editorial and project consultant Ruth Peacock, and social media and marketing consultant Oliver Bowring, from Musicarta Ltd. We have offered this training for the past six years and in that time, the media landscape has changed and so has our training. We continue to offer media interview training, but also how those skills can be transferred to communicating stories on social media. Skills for identifying, writing, filming and posting stories online are further developed in separate training courses, which we also offer.

Our weekly briefings are also regarded as training, providing information and context on stories about religion in the news aimed at journalists telling the story. Our events also offer an introduction to how the media works, and greater understanding of religion to journalists.

8. Funding

In this financial year, we received generous donations from Rank, Porticus, Culham St Gabriel Trust, the Aziz Foundation and the Saltley Trust. We also received individual donations from generous supporters and others.

The RMC accepts funds from those who support our vision, values and aims and who have a clear governance structure and transparent accountability. The RMC has an appropriate anti-bribery policy.

9. Business Development

Our executive chair, Michael Wakelin, has built on our network of supporters, including the media, faith organisations and trusts and foundations. We are the only place where news about all major religious traditions and none are found in one site. We appeal to everyone working within religion in the public square, including religious education teachers, academics, interfaith groups and people from within the traditions curious about other faiths and keen to forge links. We are grateful to academics and faith leaders who support us by offering their knowledge and expertise to the media.

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TRS-UK

We have a Memorandum of Understanding with Theology and Religious Studies UK, which represents academics in higher education throughout the UK. Their representative who continues to be involved in our work is Dr Tim Hutchings, from the University of Nottingham.

10. Statement of public benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

Benefit has been demonstrated to journalists and media professionals who have used material for programmes and articles and built their knowledge through training. Academics and RE teachers have been able to spread their knowledge and expertise through providing insight in articles and contributions to discussions with the media. Faith leaders and media organizations have engaged with the media and each other through events, training and discussions.

Results

The Charity saw a loss of £15,813 in the year on its general fund which was covered by the reserves brought forward from prior years. The total cash reserves at the end of the year were £40,476 in liquid funds, of which £16,399 was in respect of restricted funds.

Reserves Policy

The Charity is keeping future obligations low and currently has no future commitments or overheads as contributors are freelance. The current policy is to retain enough cash reserves, taking into account donations promised, to cover costs and to build up resources to fulfil the Charity's activities at the same level in the ensuing year.

Responsibilities of Trustees regarding the accounts

Charity law requires the Trustees to prepare a receipts and payments account and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year. In addition, they are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which are sufficient to show and explain the Charity transactions and to disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Michael Wakelin

Michael Wakelin
Signed on behalf of the Trustees

20 August 2025

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RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 2024-25

	2025	2025	2025	2024	2024	2024
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts						
Grants - Charities	90,000		90,000	72,587	-	72,587
Grants - individuals	1,717					
Training - Creating Connections		15,500	15,500	-	12,000	12,000
Festival 2025		10,000	10,000	-	-	-
Reporting British Muslims		8,000	8,000			
Annual Lecture (2024)		1,000	1,000	-		
TOTAL	91,717	34,500	126,217	72,587	12,000	84,587
Expenditure						
Project consultancy	28,500		28,500	17,800	-	17,800
Editorial Content & Articles	23,579		23,579	17,914	-	17,914
Social media and marketing	20,519		20,519	20,624		20,624
Reporting British Muslims		5,500	5,500			
Computers / equipment	5,815		5,815	7,053	-	7,053
Business development	12,831		12,831	9,000	-	9,000
Zoom briefings, interviews etc	12,234		12,234	10,314	2,000	12,314
Insurance	498		498	501	-	501
Professional fees	1,360		1,360	370	-	370
Podcasts	510		510	-	1,350	1,350
Training	563	2,528	3,091	1,861	-	1,861
Festivals (in 2025 and 2023)		1,101	1,101	6,999	-	6,999
Creating Connections - Wolverhampton		9,230	9,230		55,803	55,803
Lecture 2024	1,121	1,000	2,121			
Evaluation of effectiveness				6,000		6,000
TOTAL	107,530	19,359	126,889	98,436	59,153	157,589
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	-	15,813	15,141	-	25,849	47,153
Transfer between funds	-	1,258	1,258	-	6,093	6,093
Cash funds at the beginning of year	41,148		41,148	73,090	41,060	114,150
Cash Funds at the end of year	24,077	16,399	40,476	41,148	-	41,148

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st MARCH 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
	Note	£
ASSETS		
Bank and cash balances	40,476	41,148
Represented by :		
ACCUMULATED FUNDS		
Unrestricted funds	24,077	41,148
Restricted funds	4	-
Total funds at 31 March 2025	40,476	41,148
RESTRICTED FUNDS as at 31 March 2025 :		
Creating Connections	5,000	
Reporting British Muslims	2,500	
Festival 2025	8,899	
	16,399	

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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis. The receipts and payments account is a record of monies received and paid during the financial year. The accounts comply with the appropriate legal requirements.

2. FUNDS

Unrestricted funds comprise those funds which the Trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor.

3. TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING RELATED PARTIES

Included in the accounts is £12,000 (2024 - £9,000) paid to the chairman relating to business development. The Chairman also received repayment of £1,858 (2023/24 - £2,369) expenses incurred in supporting the Creating Connections and other training projects.

4. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted income received in 2024-25 was £34,500 made up of:

- A £8,500 was from the Saltley Trust for the Creating Connections event in Wolverhampton which was fully spent during the year.
- B A private donation of £10,000 was given towards funding the 2025 RMC Festival of which £1,101 was spent in 2024-25.
- C The Aziz Foundation gave £8,000 towards a journalist specialising in reporting Muslims in Britain of which £5,500 was spent during the year.
- D £2000 was for training which was fully spent.
- E £1000 was a private donation towards the cost of the annual lecture which took place in September 2024 and was fully spent.
- F £5,000 from Culham St Gabriel for a Creating Connections event to take place in Wales in 2025/6.

These accounts were approved by the board of Trustees on 1 July 2025 and signed on its behalf by

Michael Wakelin

Michael Wakelin, chair 20 August 2025

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Independent Examiner’s Report to the Trustees of Religion Media Centre

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of Religion Media Centre (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

The Charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (“the Act”).

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity’s accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent Examiner’s statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:- 

Date 02/09/2025

Keith Halstead MA(Oxon) FCA,
60 Woodcote Hurst
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 7DT

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE

England & Wales - Charity number 1169562

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Registered Charity Number

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77-79 Charlotte Street
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Trustees

	<u>Date appointed</u>
Mr Benedict Samuel Rich	10 th October 2016
Rev Christopher Landau	10 th October 2016
Mr Michael Wakelin (chair)	10 th October 2016
Mr Kevin Jaquiss	29 th March 2017
Roger Bolton	27 th June 2019
Dr Lois Lee	26 th November 2020
Dr Jasjit Singh	7 th July 2021 (resigned 12 th March 2024)
Dr Hassan Abdein	27 th March 2023

Accountant

Andrew Jennings MA FCA

Independent Examiner

Mr Keith Halstead MA (Oxon) FCA

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Cooperative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

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Trustees Report

The trustees are pleased to present the annual report of the Religion Media Centre from 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.

1. Governance

The Religion Media Centre is a Charitable Incorporated Organization, charity number 1169562, registered on 10th October 2016.

Its constitution states its objects are: 'To advance education of the public in world religion, including the Baha'i faith; Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam; Jainism; Judaism; Sikhism and Zoroastrianism by: the dissemination of accurate, authoritative, independent and impartial information and research about religious faiths to the media; and the provision of media training to religious organisations.'

It is an impartial and independent organisation aiming to help the media report and understand religion and beliefs. It has no editorial line, nor does it promote any one religion, or religious belief in general. Instead, it exists to provide accurate, timely and relevant information to the media, enabling the public to be better informed.

The trustees have met four times during the year. Jasjit Singh stepped down as a trustee on 12th March 2024.

Our Trustees are responsible for compliance with charity law and with the RMC's charitable objectives. They set the RMC's strategic direction, oversee its work, monitor progress and prioritise the RMC's activities. They support the team of consultants and freelancers who work on projects and content; monitor and supervise fund raising initiatives and advise on marketing.

Our advisory board are invited frequently to contribute to our thinking and activities.

We review our safeguarding and data management policies annually. We are registered with the Independent Commissioners Office for data protection.

We evaluate our success against KPIs measuring engagement on all social media platforms and keep our strategic objectives under review, responding to changing demands and ability to respond.

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Advisory Board members

Dr Azim Ahmed	Deputy Director at the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK
Remona Aly	Director of Communications of Exploring Islam Foundation
Dr Kate Christopher	Director Teach:RE at Culham St Gabriel
Andrew Copson	CEO of Humanists UK
Prof Adam Dinham	Professor of Faith & Public Policy, Goldsmiths
Caroline Donne	Freelance radio producer
Rabbi Alex Goldberg	Barrister and rabbi, Dean of the College of Chaplains Surrey University
Katie Harrison	Social & Public Affairs Adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury
Dr Sarah Harvey	Senior Research Officer, Inform
Dr Tim Hutchings	Assistant Professor of Religious Ethics, University of Nottingham
James Irving	St Bride's Fleet Street Head of Finance and Fundraising
Andrew Jennings	Accountant and finance adviser
Rev Tony Miles	Superintendent Minister Methodist Central Hall, Westminster
Prof Jolyon Mitchell	Professor of Communications, Arts and Religion, Edinburgh University
Dr Suzanne Newcombe	Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, Open University; Director Inform.
Canon Ed Newell	Principal and Chief Executive of Cumberland Lodge
Prof Stephen Pattison	Former Professor of Religion Ethics and Practice Birmingham University
Rev George Pitcher	Journalist, author and an Anglican priest
Eleanor Puttock	Digital chaplain, Methodist Homes for the Aged
Rabbi Jonathan Romain	Rabbi at Maidenhead Synagogue
Jasvir Singh	Barrister, Chair of City Sikhs, Honorary Fellow, Edward Cadbury Centre
Dr Jasjit Singh	Associate Professor, University of Leeds
Nick Spencer	Senior Fellow Theos think tank
Judy Trotter	Head of Adult Education & Learning, JW3 Centre
Karl Wightman	UK Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

2. Activities, achievements and performance:

Editorial

We continued to provide daily news bulletins of news about religion, a weekly roundup of news, factsheets, explainers, timelines, weekly zoom media briefings and original journalism from our team of freelance journalists - Rosie Dawson, Tim Wyatt, Christopher Lamb, Andrew Brown, Catherine Pepinster, Amardeep Bassey and Lianne Kolirin.

Among the headline stories covered this year:

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- Liberal Judaism and The Movement for Reform Judaism announce the creation of a new movement merging with each other to represent all Britain's Progressive Jews
- The coronation of King Charles III, defender of the faith, who emphasised the idea of service and interfaith dialogue.
- Mike Pilavachi, founder of the evangelical charismatic movement Soul Survivor, resigned and suspended over inappropriate relationships with young men, involving massaging and wrestling them to the floor.
- Faith leaders opposed the government's Rwanda bill to remove asylum seekers
- The Church of England's general synod descended into chaos at its meeting in York, as the two sacked members of the Independent Safeguard Board told their side of the story. Two independent reports suggested new processes.
- The number of students who sat A-level Religious Studies this summer fell by 3.5 percent in England and 24 percent in Wales. Reported shortage of trained Religious Education specialist teachers. Calls for a national plan for RE, replacing numerous local agreements.
- Rishi Sunak told a Hindu gathering at the University of Cambridge that his Hindu faith influences every aspect of his life and gives him the courage to do his best as Prime Minister.
- 6,500 people from 95 countries, representing 212 spiritual traditions, attended the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago.
- The National Zakat Foundation has reported the highest income in its 11-year history, distributing over £5.5 million in 2022, up from £3.8m in 2021.
- Half a million Catholic young people greeted Pope Francis for the 37th World Youth Day in Lisbon
- Sinead O'Connor, the Irish singer who rose to fame with the ballad "Nothing Compares To You", was buried in a Muslim ceremony in Bray, Co Wicklow. She converted to Islam five years ago.
- The Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, accused the Indian government of being behind the killing of a Canadian Sikh, shot dead outside a gurdwara in British Columbia. Another Sikh activist died suddenly in Birmingham and his family want an investigation.
- META (formerly Facebook) withdrew a multi-million pound scheme providing community reporters. The BBC cut local radio Sunday morning religious shows from 39 to 13
- The Rome Synod of Bishops met in October following a global consultation, opening the prospect of wider involvement of women and lay people
- War in the Middle East broke out on 7 October, when Hamas killed 1200 Israelis and kidnapped 252 in a shocking incursion. Subsequently, Israeli attacks on Gaza have killed 30,000 people. Antisemitism and Islamophobia has risen to record levels. Faith leaders made repeated calls for a ceasefire.
- The Sunday programme on BBC Radio 4 celebrated its 50th anniversary.
- The Church of England agreed to introduce standalone services for blessing same sex couples, for a trial period. Bishops decided prayers of blessing could take place from 17 December. Evangelicals moved to select their own bishops, preparing for a split
- A Faith Pavilion at Cop28 in Dubai provided a platform for faith leaders to appeal for more action from world leaders on global warming.
- Paula Vennells, ex CEO of the Post Office, "shortlisted to be Bishop of London".
- The Media Bill came under scrutiny for omitting an obligation for public service broadcasters to include programmes on religion.
- The government withdrew funding to the Inter Faith Network, leading to its closure

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3. Events

- BRIEFINGS

We continued holding weekly media zoom briefings, where a panel explains a story in the news providing context and background. Our briefings reached more than double the number of people compared to the previous year. Our speakers include university academics, authors, faith leaders and teachers. We collaborated with other organisations such as the National Churches Trust, to provide these events. We record the briefings for our YouTube channel and they are made into podcasts, with our audience more than doubling. All the sessions are produced by Oliver Bowring from Musicarta Ltd.

- FESTIVAL:

Our fifth Religion Media Festival was held on 15th June 2023 at the JW3 centre in north London. Our keynote speaker was the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, interviewed by ITV's Julie Etchingham, a wide-ranging discussion on the many challenges within and outside the church. Our panels included a consideration of the influence of religion on world affairs, a panel chaired by BBC religion editor Aleem Maqbool, and our other speakers included Daisy Scalchi, BBC Commissioning Editor - Specialist Factual.

4. The Creating Connections Project

Our second series of Creating Connections events, bringing together local faith groups and the media, took place in Liverpool, Bristol, Newcastle, Bradford and Norwich. These were funded by Culham St Gabriel Trust, and a sixth event in Coventry was made possible by a grant from the Saltley Trust. In each city, representatives from the BBC, ITV and local newspapers took questions from the floor to explain how they take decisions.

On average, 60 people attended each event, with 82 per cent saying it had improved their view of the media and 90 per cent saying it improved their view of religion. The audience included local media, faith leaders, local councillors, RE teachers, academics and those interested in religion in the public square.

Our events took place as BBC local radio religion programme presenters were being made redundant and Reach PLC announced cutbacks across the UK. But the journalists who joined our events made contacts with faith representatives and there were many opportunities for people to share their news stories, which have since been followed up.

There were discussions about the importance of a social media presence for all faith groups, enabling better communication within and outside their organisations. There was also a shared fear of a backlash when speaking out, which came out in small group discussions.

There were many great stories which emerged for the first time and an acknowledgment that more media training would be beneficial for people to identify their stories, learn how to contact the media to get their story across, develop social media skills and grow in confidence when telling their story.

Young people were invited to speak at each event, sharing their views on religion in the media and revealing they consumed news more on social media platforms, but not radio, TV or papers. The

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2024

panels included sixth formers brought by RE teachers and university students brought by their tutors. In one event, media students presented TikTok films on religion, provoking a lively discussion on how the story of religion can be told on all platforms.

Once more we found that people engaged in faith communities wanted to tell journalists of their stories and the journalists wanted to hear about them. These events acted as catalysts to kick start conversations and develop good relations. They also provided a unique space for all those engaged in religion in the public square to meet, discuss, share and learn.

6. Impact and communications

Our audience has continued to grow through all our social media channels, achieving a one million reach in this year. We engaged Musicarta Ltd to increase our presence on all social media channels, versioning our material on each platform, enabling a steady increase in support.

Our YouTube views increased by 60 per cent. Our new website has done very well this year, with the number of monthly page views and monthly users doubling in number. Our newsletters on mailchimp with the daily news bulletin and weekly roundup continued to grow by around a third, with a high engagement. We have increased our presence on Linked In where impressions have more than doubled and Facebook, where impressions rose four fold.

Journalists have engaged with us through all our activities and we aim to strengthen these ties next year with more events targeted at the media in particular.

7. Training

Our weekly briefings offer background information and context on stories about religion in the news aimed at journalists writing the story. Our events also offer basic media knowledge and greater understanding to faith representatives, which we build on with bespoke media training events for faith leaders. We have offered targeted training sessions on TikTok, with Sophia Smith Galer and Matt Batten; how to move from traditional to digital media, with Ruth Gledhill and John McManus; and understanding legal systems in religious traditions which operate in Britain, with lawyers and academics from different faith traditions. We have offered training to all-comers and by arrangement with different organisations during the year.

8. Funding

In this financial year, we received generous donations from Rank, Porticus, Culham St Gabriel's Trust, the Church of England, the Saltley Trust, UNITAS and Open Society. We also received individual donations from generous supporters and others.

The RMC accepts funds from those who support our vision, values and aims and who have a clear governance structure and transparent accountability. The RMC has an appropriate anti bribery policy.

9. Business Development

Our executive chair, Michael Wakelin, has helped to create a vibrant network of supporters among the media but also people outside who value our work. We are the only place where news about all

**Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2024**

major religious traditions and none are found in one site. We appeal to religious education teachers, academics, interfaith groups and people from within the traditions curious about other faiths and keen to forge links. We are grateful to academics and faith leaders who support us by offering their knowledge and expertise to the media.

TRS-UK

We have a Memorandum of Understanding with Theology and Religious Studies UK, which represents academics in higher education throughout the UK. Their representative who continues to be involved in our work is Dr Tim Hutchings, from the University of Nottingham.

10. Statement of public benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

We have advanced the education of the public in religion through our work with key groups. Journalists and media professionals have used our material for programmes and articles and built their knowledge through training. Academics and RE teachers have been able to spread their knowledge and expertise through providing insight in articles and contributions to discussions with the media. Faith leaders and media organisations have engaged with the media and each other through events, training and discussions.

Results

The Charity saw a loss of £25,849 (2023 – loss of £21,711) in the year on its general fund. However, this represented the utilisation of cash reserves brought forward from previous years, so that the net cash reserves at the end of the year were £41,148 (2023 £73,090) in liquid funds.

Reserves Policy

The Charity is keeping future obligations low and currently has no future commitments or overheads as contributors are freelance. The current policy is to retain enough cash reserves, taking into account donations promised, to cover costs and to build up resources to fulfil the Charity's activities at the same level in the ensuing year.

Responsibilities of Trustees regarding the accounts

Charity law requires the Trustees to prepare a receipts and payments account and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year. In addition, they are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which are sufficient to show and explain the Charity transactions and to disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities

Michael Wakelin

Signed on behalf of the Trustees



1 July 2024

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2024

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE - DRAFT ACCOUNTS 2023-2024

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 2023-24

	2024			2023		2023 Total £
	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	
Receipts						
Grants	72,587	-	72,587	72,500	-	72,500
Training - 5 Cities Project	-	10,000	10,000	-	45,000	45,000
Podcasts	-	-	-	-	10,560	10,560
Other	-	2,000	2,000	-	5,300	5,300
TOTAL	72,587	12,000	84,587	72,500	60,860	133,360
Expenditure						
Project consultancy	17,800	-	17,800	24,008	-	24,008
Communications costs	17,914	-	17,914	16,529	-	16,529
Social media and marketing	20,624	-	20,624	21,622	-	21,622
Computers / equipment	7,053	-	7,053	5,062	-	5,062
Business development	9,000	-	9,000	13,000	-	13,000
Events	10,314	2,000	12,314	7,124	4,125	11,249
Travel	-	-	-	159	-	159
Insurance	501	-	501	430	-	430
Professional fees	370	-	370	1,337	-	1,337
Podcasts	-	1,350	1,350	-	17,135	17,135
Training & RPL	1,861	-	1,861	48	300	348
Festival 2023	6,999	-	6,999	4,892	-	4,892
5 Cities Project 2023	-	55,803	55,803	-	4,940	4,940
Evaluation of effectiveness	6,000	-	6,000	-	-	-
TOTAL	98,436	59,153	157,589	94,211	26,500	120,711
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	- 25,849	- 47,153	73,002	- 21,711	34,360	12,649
Transfer between funds	- 6,093	6,093	-	- 1,075	1,075	-
Cash funds at the beginning of year	73,090	41,060	114,150	95,876	5,625	101,501
Cash Funds at the end of year	41,148	-	41,148	73,090	41,060	114,150

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st MARCH 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
ASSETS			
Bank and cash balances		<u>41,148</u>	<u>114,150</u>
Represented by :			
ACCUMULATED FUNDS			
Unrestricted funds		41,148	73,090
Restricted funds	4	-	41,060
Total funds at 31 March 2024		<u>41,148</u>	<u>114,150</u>

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2024

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis. The receipts and payments account is a record of monies received and paid during the financial year. The accounts comply with the appropriate legal requirements.

2. FUNDS

Unrestricted funds comprise those funds which the Trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor.

3. TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING RELATED PARTIES

Included in the accounts is £9,000 (2023 - £13,000) paid to the chairman relating to business development. The Chairman also received repayment of £2369.44 expenses incurred in supporting the Creating Connections project.

4. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted income received in 2023-24 was £12,000 predominately from the Saltley Trust given towards the Creating Connections project which combined with restricted funds of £41,060 brought forward from 2022-23 enabled the Religion Media Centre to complete this ambitious project. As at 31 March 2024 all restricted funds have been spent on the projects for which they were donated.

These accounts were approved by the board of Trustees on 1 July 2024 and signed on its behalf by Michael Wakelin, chair



1 July 2024

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2024

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Religion Media Centre

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of Religion Media Centre (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

The Charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent Examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:- 

Date..... 31/07/2024

Keith Halstead MA(Oxon) FCA,
60 Woodcote Hurst
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 7DT

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE

England & Wales - Charity number 1169562

Accounts

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

Registered Charity Number

1169562

Address

Collaboration House
77-79 Charlotte Street
London
W1T 4PW

Trustees

	<u>Date appointed</u>
Mr Benedict Samuel Rich	10 th October 2016
Rev Christopher Landau	10 th October 2016
Mr Michael Wakelin (chair)	10 th October 2016
Mr Kevin Jaquiss	29 th March 2017
Roger Bolton	27 th June 2019
Alison Gow	26 th November 2020 (resigned 23 March 2023)
Dr Lois Lee	26 th November 2020
Hussein Kesvani	26 th November 2020 (resigned 23 March 2023)
Dr Jasjit Singh	7 th July 2021
Dr Hassan Abdein	27 th March 2023

Accountant

Andrew Jennings MA FCA

Independent Examiner

Mr Keith Halstead MA (Oxon) FCA

Bank

Cooperative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

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Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

Trustees Report

The trustees are pleased to present the annual report of the Religion Media Centre from 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023.

1. Governance

The Religion Media Centre is a Charitable Incorporated Organization, charity number 1169562, registered on 10th October 2016.

Its constitution states its objects are: 'To advance education of the public in world religion, including the Baha'i faith; Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam; Jainism; Judaism; Sikhism and Zoroastrianism by: the dissemination of accurate, authoritative, independent and impartial information and research about religious faiths to the media; and the provision of media training to religious organisations.'

It is an impartial and independent organization aiming to help the media report and understand religion and beliefs. It has no editorial line, nor does it promote any one religion, or religious belief in general. Instead, it exists to provide accurate, timely and relevant information to the media, enabling the public to be better informed.

The trustees have met six times during the year. Hussein Kesvani and Alison Gow stepped down on 23rd March 2023. Dr Hassan Abdein joined as a trustee on 27th March 2023.

Our Trustees are responsible for compliance with charity law and with the RMC's charitable objectives. They set the RMC's strategic direction, oversee its work, monitor progress and prioritise the RMC's activities. They support the team of consultants and freelancers who work on projects and content; monitor and supervise fund raising initiatives and advise on marketing.

Our advisory board are invited frequently to contribute to our thinking and activities.

We review our safeguarding and data management policies annually. We are registered with the Independent Commissioners Office for data protection. We are a member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

We evaluate our success against KPIs measuring engagement on all social media platforms and keep our strategic objectives under review, responding to changing demands and ability to respond.

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

Advisory Board members

Dr Azim Ahmed	Deputy Director at the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK
Remona Aly	Director of Communications of Exploring Islam Foundation
Dr Kate Christopher	Director Teach:RE at Culham St Gabriel
Andrew Copson	CEO of Humanists UK
Prof Adam Dinham	Professor of Faith & Public Policy, Goldsmiths
Caroline Donne	Freelance radio producer
Rabbi Alex Goldberg	Barrister and rabbi, Dean of the College of Chaplains Surrey University
Katie Harrison	Social & Public Affairs Adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury
Dr Sarah Harvey	Senior Research Officer, Inform
Dr Tim Hutchings	Assistant Professor of Religious Ethics, University of Nottingham
James Irving	St Bride's Fleet Street Head of Finance and Fundraising
Andrew Jennings	Accountant and finance adviser
Rev Tony Miles	Superintendent Minister Methodist Central Hall, Westminster
Prof Jolyon Mitchell	Professor of Communications, Arts and Religion, Edinburgh University
Dr Suzanne Newcombe	Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, Open University; Director Inform.
Canon Ed Newell	Principal and Chief Executive of Cumberland Lodge
Prof Stephen Pattison	Former Professor of Religion Ethics and Practice Birmingham University
Rev George Pitcher	Journalist, author and an Anglican priest
Eleanor Puttock	Digital chaplain, Methodist Homes for the Aged
Rabbi Jonathan Romain	Rabbi at Maidenhead Synagogue
Jasvir Singh	Barrister, Chair of City Sikhs, Honorary Fellow, Edward Cadbury Centre
Dr Jasjit Singh	Associate Professor, University of Leeds
Nick Spencer	Senior Fellow Theos think tank
Judy Trotter	Head of Adult Education & Learning, JW3 Centre
Karl Wightman	UK Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

2. Activities, achievements and performance:

Editorial

We continued to provide daily news bulletins of news about religion, delivered by email to an audience which increased by 67 per cent over the year. The bulletins are delivered into people's inboxes at 0700 every weekday morning. Journalists find them useful tipping them off about stories in the news, but academics and RE teachers and faith leaders are also frequent users, as the stories spark discussions among students. We know that journalists specialising in the reporting of religion and producers of programmes in this field, read these bulletins on a daily basis.

Our established team of experienced freelance journalists - Rosie Dawson, Tim Wyatt, Christopher Lamb, Andrew Brown, Catherine Pepinster, Amardeep Bassey and Lianne Kolirin - continued to produce news stories, analysis and features. Academics also joined in the production of fact sheets.

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

This year we experimented with explainers and timelines, providing research and context for running news stories.

This was a momentous year for news:

- The war in Ukraine which began in February 2022 continued through this year and we covered stories about the impact on the Orthodox church, the efforts by religious groups to help millions of displaced people and peace efforts.
- We covered the Queen's platinum jubilee in June, her death in September and the accession of King Charles III. We reviewed the influence and impact of the Queen's deeply committed faith, spoke to people from various faith groups on her legacy and reported on the immediate moves made by King Charles to work alongside faith groups in their work
- We attended the Lambeth conference of global Anglican bishops, reporting on their disagreement over same sex relationships and remarkable moment of the acceptance of difference. We also reported the stories of bishops dealing with catastrophic floods, political turmoil and poverty
- The UK hosted the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in July 2022 and we reported on the stories of persecution and inter governmental response
- The World Cup in Qatar at the end of 2022 gave rise to stories on values and ethics, as well as the inclusion of Muslims in the beautiful game
- In the autumn of 2022 the UK saw the demise of two Prime Ministers, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, and the rise of the UK's first Hindu Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak. We reported on values and ethics in public life and the new PM's tradition
- The 2021 census results showing a fall in Christian affiliation and a rise in "non religion" were published and pored over in November 2022
- In March 2023, the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury marked ten years in office and we reported on their achievements and challenges

Among the other stories we covered this year:

- Religion in public life – political debates and faith perspectives on the cost of living crisis, poverty and the government's plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, contested by bishops in the Lords. Then in February SNP leadership contender and "wee free" church member, Kate Forbes, was put under the spotlight for her opposition to same sex marriage on religious grounds
- The "Our Lady of Heaven" film protests and the subsequent demise of Imam Qari Asim as a government adviser
- 100 year anniversary of the BBC and how religious broadcasting has changed over that time
- The Church of England came into the headlines again over safeguarding, same sex blessings in church, the drawn out dispute with Dean Martyn Percy, church closures and new evangelical movements
- Pope Francis continued his moves to create a voice for all members through the synod process, despite his failing health. This year also saw the death of Pope Benedict XVI
- The year ended with extraordinary scenes at Asbury College in the USA, which witnessed a two week long prayer and worship service, known as a revival

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

3. Events

- BRIEFINGS

We continued our regular media briefings, held on zoom, where guest speakers join a panel to explain a story in the news. We started this during the Covid lockdown and it has become an important regular part of our work. This year we increased our number of briefings and our attendees grew by 40 per cent. Our audience includes journalists, broadcasters, teachers, academics and RMC supporters who wish to be better informed.

All the sessions are recorded for our YouTube channel, produced by Oliver Bowring from Musicarta Ltd. 221 speakers took part in our zooms, drawn from universities, faith groups and publications in the UK and abroad.

The highlight was the success of the briefing on the 2021 census, showing a rise in non-religion, with more than 100 people joining the call.

We continued to produce some zooms in collaboration with external organisations such as book publishers and report authors. We collaborated with the think tank Theos for a three part series on Artificial Intelligence and the idea of immortality, the notion of the soul and impact on human relationships.

- FESTIVAL:

Our fourth Religion Media Festival was held on 12th May 2022 at the JW3 centre in north London. Our keynote speaker was Cardinal Vincent Nichols and our key interview was with Aleem Maqbool, the newly appointed BBC Religion Editor. Panel discussions included “science, religion and the future”, reporting communities, and women and religion. This was our first in person festival since the pandemic.

- LECTURE

Our second annual lecture was held in September 2022 at St Bride’s, Fleet Street, where Professor Linda Woodhead, from King’s College London, delivered an address on “Considering the future of religion in Britain”, in advance of the 2021 census results which showed a rise in non-religion. The lecture was well attended and is the first of we hope a long association with St Bride’s.

- EVENTS

We put on an event with the UN Faith for Rights programme at the UKTV centre in November 2022, with guest speaker Professor Nazila Ghanea, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and an audience of journalists, press officers and other media professionals. This was organised with Rabbi Alex Goldberg, a member of our advisory board.

4. The Creating Connections Project

We have been fortunate in being given a further grant from Culham St Gabriel’s Trust to put on another series of “Creating Connections” events in five cities in England, bringing together faith and media groups to aid understanding and create new networks. This is in addition to our being granted a “Rank Foundation Golden Award” which also helps towards this worthwhile project. We are planning this second series in the autumn of 2023 in Liverpool, Bristol, Newcastle, Bradford and Norwich. A sixth city – Coventry - has been added with a generous grant from the Saltley Trust.

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

These events are aimed at addressing the disconnect between the media and religious communities in local areas, with both sides complaining about the lack of coverage and lack of communication. Our events bring together people engaged in religion in the public square, often for the first time, including local media, faith leaders, RE teachers and academics. Plans are advancing, engaging leaders of media organisations and journalists reporting their local communities.

5. The Religion Media Centre Podcast

We have introduced a podcast platform for discussions on religious topics and “big interviews” with people making the news. Our funding from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust was for one year only and we are continuing the work as our budget allows. Key well known broadcasters are involved in our output, including Roger Bolton, presenter Hannah Scott Joynt, former senior BBC editor Leo Devine, and journalist and broadcaster Rosie Dawson. Our podcasts are produced by Oliver Bowring at Musicarta Ltd.

6. Impact and communications

Through the hard work of our social media and marketing team, our following has steadily increased during the year on Twitter, LinkedIn, through our website, by newsletters and via our You Tube channel.

Our Twitter following grew by 25 per cent, with many new followers arriving from live tweeting our briefings, and impressions doubled. Linked In grew by 50 per cent and is a key vehicle for keeping in touch with our specialist writers and academics.

Our new website has done very well this year, with the number of views and users doubling in number. The website is consistently reviewed and updated as required. Our new tab listing commentators and their areas of expertise is a unique and well regarded offering.

Our news letters on mailchimp continued to grow in popularity and are widely used and actively anticipated, as noted above. These are used for daily news bulletins, weekly newsletters and weekly media briefings, and their circulation increased by a remarkable 52 per cent this year.

We were sorry to lose our social media and business development consultant Sorcha Connell, who left us for Lambeth Palace at the end of 2022. She was an integral part of the team which has built up the charity into an ambitious and lovely organisation and is much missed. Much of her work has been taken over by Oliver Bowring at Musicarta Ltd, who adds it to his already impressive list of contributions to the organisation.

7. Training

We ran two bespoke zoom training courses this year. One was on reporting the world cup in Qatar, understanding the religious nature of society and the context of the event. This was led by journalist Amardeep Bassey. The other was on avoiding stereotypes when choosing pictures to go with a news story and was led by academic Dr Keith Kahn Harris and photographer Rob Stothard. In addition, our briefings offered insight and information on stories which journalists were covering in the news.

8. Funding

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

In this financial year, we received generous donations from four foundations – Rank, Porticus, Halley Stewart and Culham St Gabriel’s Trust; we also received a Rank Golden Award and donations from the Church of England, the Bible Society, Michael Sternberg, the UN Faith for Rights programme and Unitas.

The RMC accepts funds from those who support our vision, values and aims and who have a clear governance structure and transparent accountability. The RMC has an appropriate anti bribery policy.

9. Business Development

Our executive chair, Michael Wakelin, is responsible for business development and seeks individuals and organisations who support our aims and are willing to support our work. He was aided by our social media consultant Sorcha Connell, generous advice for our advisory panel and trustees and help from Musicarta Ltd.

Our audience

We believe we reached over 2.5 million people this year through all our varied forms of work and social media including via events, briefings, newsletters, website and social media. Our aim is to help the media report religion but we have found that many people outside the media have become loyal supporters. We are the only place where news about all major religious traditions and none are found in one site. We appeal to religious education teachers, academics, interfaith groups and people from within the traditions curious about other faiths and keen to forge links. Academics and faith leaders are keen to support us to offer their knowledge and expertise to the media. The top age group accessing our website is 25-34

TRS-UK

We continue to be associated with Theology and Religious Studies UK, which represents academics in higher education throughout the UK. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, we attend each other’s annual meetings and include a representative on our advisory group, who helps point us towards academics whose area of study crosses a news story. This year, our new representative continues to be Dr Tim Hutchings, from the University of Nottingham.

10. Statement of public benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

Benefit has been demonstrated to journalists and media professionals who have used material for programmes and articles and built their knowledge through training. Academics and RE teachers have been able to spread their knowledge and expertise through providing insight in articles and contributions to discussions with the media. Faith leaders and media organizations have engaged with the media and each other through events, training and discussions.

Results

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

The Charity saw a loss of £21,711 in the year on its general fund. However, this represented the utilisation of cash reserves brought forward from previous years, so that the net cash reserves at the end of the year were £114,150 in liquid funds.

Reserves Policy

The Charity is keeping future obligations low and currently has no future commitments or overheads as contributors are freelance. The current policy is to retain enough cash reserves to cover costs and to build up resources to fulfil the Charity's activities at the same level in the ensuing year.

Responsibilities of Trustees regarding the accounts

Charity law requires the Trustees to prepare a receipts and payments account and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year. In addition, they are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which are sufficient to show and explain the Charity transactions and to disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Michael Wakelin

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

Michael Wakelin

18 July 2023

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE - ACCOUNTS 2022-2023

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 2022-23

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2022</u>
	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Receipts						
Grants	72,500	-	72,500	100,000	-	100,000
Training - 5 Cities Project	-	45,000	45,000	-	10,000	10,000
Podcasts	-	10,560	10,560	-	10,560	10,560
Other	-	5,300	5,300	-	-	-
TOTAL	72,500	60,860	133,360	100,000	20,560	120,560
Expenditure						
Project consultancy	24,008	-	24,008	19,500	-	19,500
Communications costs	16,529	-	16,529	21,451	-	21,451
Social media and marketing	21,622	-	21,622	24,994	-	24,994
Computers / equipment	5,062	-	5,062	6,571	-	6,571
Business development	13,000	-	13,000	12,000	-	12,000
Events	7,124	4,125	11,249	5,887	-	5,887
Travel	159	-	159	-	-	-
Insurance	430	-	430	417	-	417
Professional fees	1,337	-	1,337	574	-	574
Podcasts	-	17,135	17,135	-	4,935	4,935
Training & RPL	48	300	348	336	18,058	18,394
Festival 2022	4,892	-	4,892	-	-	-
5 Cities Project 2023	-	4,940	4,940	-	-	-
TOTAL	94,211	26,500	120,711	91,730	22,993	114,723
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	- 21,711	34,360	12,649	8,270	- 2,433	5,837
Transfer between funds	- 1,075	1,075	-	- 1,558	1,558	-
Cash funds at the beginning of year	95,876	5,625	101,501	89,164	6,500	95,664
Cash Funds at the end of year	73,090	41,060	114,150	95,876	5,625	101,501

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st MARCH 2023

	Note	2023	2022
		£	£
ASSETS			
Bank and cash balances		<u>114,150</u>	<u>101,501</u>
Represented by :			
ACCUMULATED FUNDS			
Unrestricted funds		73,090	95,876
Restricted funds	4	41,060	5,625
Total funds at 31 March 2022		<u>114,150</u>	<u>101,501</u>

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis. The receipts and payments account is a record of monies received and paid during the financial year. The accounts comply with the appropriate legal requirements.

2. FUNDS

Unrestricted funds comprise those funds which the Trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor.

3. TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING RELATED PARTIES

Included in the accounts is £13,000 paid to the chairman relating to business development.

4. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted income in 2022-23 was £45,000 from Culham St Gabriel's Trust and the Rank Golden Award for the Five Cities project and £10,560 from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust for the podcasts, plus additional smaller grants amounting to £5,300 in respect of grants for specific events organised by the Religion Media Centre. Of these grants £41,060 has not yet been spent, most of which relates to the Five Cities project which is scheduled to take place in the autumn of 2023.

These accounts were approved by the board of Trustees on 18 July 2023 and signed on its behalf by Michael Wakelin, chair



18 July 2023

**Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2023**

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Religion Media Centre

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of Religion Media Centre (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

The Charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").


I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent Examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:- 

Date 29th July 2023

Keith Halstead MA(Oxon) FCA,
60 Woodcote Hurst
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 7DT

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE

England & Wales - Charity number 1169562

Accounts

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022

Registered Charity Number

1169562

Address

Collaboration House
77-79 Charlotte Street
London
W1T 4PW

Trustees

	<u>Date appointed</u>
Mr Benedict Samuel Rich	10 th October 2016
Rev Christopher Landau	10 th October 2016
Mr Michael Wakelin (chair)	10 th October 2016
Mr Kevin Jaquiss	29 th March 2017
Roger Bolton	27 th June 2019
Alison Gow	26 th November 2020
Dr Lois Lee	26 th November 2020
Hussein Kesvani	26 th November 2020
Dr Jasjit Singh	7 th July 2021

Accountant

Andrew Jennings MA FCA

Independent Examiner

Mr Keith Halstead MA (Oxon) FCA

Bank

Cooperative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022

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**Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022**

Trustees Report

The trustees are pleased to present the annual report of the Religion Media Centre from 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022.

1. Governance

The Religion Media Centre is a Charitable Incorporated Organization, charity number 1169562, registered on 10th October 2016.

Its constitution states its objects are: 'To advance education of the public in world religion, including the Baha'i faith; Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam; Jainism; Judaism; Sikhism and Zoroastrianism by: the dissemination of accurate, authoritative, independent and impartial information and research about religious faiths to the media; and the provision of media training to religious organisations.'

It is an impartial and independent organization aiming to help the media report and understand religion and beliefs. It has no editorial line, nor does it promote any one religion, or religious belief in general. Instead, it exists to provide accurate, timely and relevant information to the media, enabling the public to be better informed.

The trustees have met four times during the year. Dr Jasjit Singh, Associate Professor in the School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science at the University of Leeds, joined the trustees on 7th July 2021.

Our Trustees are responsible for compliance with charity law and with the RMC's charitable objectives. They set the RMC's strategic direction, oversee its work, monitor progress and prioritise the RMC's activities. They support the team of consultants and freelancers who work on projects and content; monitor and supervise fund raising initiatives and advise on marketing.

The advisory board are invited frequently to contribute to our thinking and activities. One new member was added this year, Dr Tim Hutchings, Assistant Professor of Religious Ethics in the Faculty of Arts, University of Nottingham.

We have taken advice and created a policy on copyrighting our work. We review our safeguarding and data management policies annually. We are registered with the Independent Commissioners Office for data protection. We are a member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

We evaluate our success against KPIs measuring engagement on all social media platforms and build strategic objectives each year.

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022

Advisory Board members

Dr Azim Ahmed	Deputy Director at the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK
Remona Aly	Director of Communications of Exploring Islam Foundation
Dr Kate Christopher	Director Teach:RE at Culham St Gabriel
Andrew Copson	CEO of Humanists UK
Prof Adam Dinham	Professor of Faith & Public Policy, Goldsmiths
Caroline Donne	Freelance radio producer
Rabbi Alex Goldberg	Barrister and rabbi, Dean of the College of Chaplains Surrey University
Katie Harrison	Social & Public Affairs Adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury
Dr Sarah Harvey	Senior Research Officer, Inform
Dr Tim Hutchings	Assistant Professor of Religious Ethics, University of Nottingham
James Irving	St Bride's Fleet Street Head of Finance and Fundraising
Andrew Jennings	Accountant and finance adviser
Rev Tony Miles	Superintendent Minister Methodist Central Hall, Westminster
Prof Jolyon Mitchell	Professor of Communications, Arts and Religion, Edinburgh University
Dr Suzanne Newcombe	Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, Open University; Director Inform.
Canon Ed Newell	Principal and Chief Executive of Cumberland Lodge
Prof Stephen Pattison	Former Professor of Religion Ethics and Practice Birmingham University
Rev George Pitcher	Journalist, author and an Anglican priest
Eleanor Puttock	Digital chaplain, Methodist Homes for the Aged
Rabbi Jonathan Romain	Rabbi at Maidenhead Synagogue
Jasvir Singh	Barrister, Chair of City Sikhs, Honorary Fellow, Edward Cadbury Centre
Dr Jasjit Singh	Associate Professor, University of Leeds
Nick Spencer	Senior Fellow Theos think tank
Judy Trotter	Head of Adult Education & Learning, JW3 Centre
Karl Wightman	UK Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

2. Activities, achievements and performance:

Editorial

The daily bulletins of news about religion continued this year, attracting loyal daily audiences which doubled in a year. The bulletins are delivered into people's inboxes at 0700 every weekday morning. Journalists find them useful tipping them off about stories in the news, but academics and RE teachers and faith leaders are also frequent users.

A team of experienced freelance journalists and sub editors continued to produce news stories, analysis and features. The established team of Rosie Dawson, Tim Wyatt, Christopher Lamb, Andrew Brown, Catherine Pepinster and Lianne Kolirin continued this year. Ruth Peacock has continued her engagement as editorial consultant.

**Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022**

Among the top foreign stories covered this year were:

- The split in the Orthodox church after Russia's invasion of Ukraine
- Faith response to the fall of Afghanistan and rehoming refugees
- Unmarked graves found in church run residential schools in Canada and the USA
- Tributes to Archbishop Desmond Tutu who died in December 2021
- Violence in the middle east leading to a rise in antisemitism in the UK

And top home stories:

- Tributes to Prince Philip as a man who listened and engaged with religious dialogue
- Cop26 and climate change - a shared concern across faiths
- Faith leaders' verdict on morals and ethics in public life and response to deprivation
- Restructuring and financial pressures on religious organisations after Covid19 lockdowns
- Sex abuse cases in churches in England, France and Australia
- Same sex marriage allowed by Church in Wales and the Methodist church in Britain

Factsheets continued to be prepared with background to running stories, for example a timeline of the Martyn Percy dispute at Christ Church College Oxford, backgrounders on the Orthodox church in Ukraine; and the importance of Zakat for Muslims in need. These are prepared by our journalists and academics.

3. Events

- BRIEFINGS:

Our media briefings continued to be held on zoom, where guest speakers are invited to share their knowledge and give an opinion, contributing to a discussion on a story behind the headlines. Our audience includes journalists, broadcasters, teachers, academics and RMC supporters who wish to be better informed.

All the sessions are recorded for our YouTube channel, produced by Oliver Bowring from Musicarta Ltd. 158 speakers took part in our zooms, reaching an audience in person and via YouTube of 21,000. The highest audience was a zoom about the war in Ukraine, featuring guest Lord Rowan Williams, explaining the religious significance of Russia's claim on the territory and the tension within the Orthodox church with allegiance to Moscow. Our guests have included the Archbishop of York, bishops, faith leaders, community leaders, speakers from America, Rome and all nations and regions in the UK.

Our topics are wide ranging and global. Reports were prepared on all our media briefings which included stories such as the opening of the "House of One", a space for Muslims, Christians and Jews to gather and worship in Berlin; the activities of faith groups at Cop26 in Glasgow; shared concern across faith groups on poverty and the cut to universal credit and an explanation of the different branches of Islam found in Britain.

Our hosts have included broadcasters Rosie Dawson, Roger Bolton, Trevor Barnes, William Crawley and our chair Michael Wakelin.

**Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022**

We continued to produce some zooms in collaboration with external organisations such as book publishers and report authors. Our most notable was a session with the Football Association on the way Christianity is intertwined with the sport.

- **FESTIVAL:**

Our third Religion Media Festival "Exploring Belief", postponed from 2020 due to Covid, was held on Monday 12th April 2021, featuring guest speaker Lord Rowan Williams. Sessions were held on British Islam, the influence of white evangelicals in America and the comparison to evangelicals in this country, how young people engaged with religion during lockdowns and reporting communities in Britain. Ticket sales were lower, but our presence was maintained.

We started planning for the Religion Media Festival in 2022 and this was held in May 2022, again in collaboration with the JW3 Centre in north London.

- **LECTURE**

Our first annual lecture was held in 2019 and plans for the next two years were postponed because of Covid. But we have planned for our second lecture to be held at St Bride's church, Fleet Street, in September 2022.

4. The Five Cities Project

For many years the RMC has observed a disconnect between the media and religious communities especially in local areas, both sides complaining about the lack of coverage and lack of communication. In response to this, in the autumn of 2021, we organised events in five cities in the UK with the aim of Creating Connections between local media, faith leaders, RE teachers and academics. This was made possible through generous funding from Culham St Gabriel's Trust, whose vision of aiding understanding of religion in society we share.

We gathered a production group from within our supporters and freelancers and chose cities where we knew people and saw a need. The list was Plymouth, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Nottingham. We created steering groups in each city, working through people we knew and forging links with others, eg interfaith networks, regional publications, regional BBC news and teachers via the Association of RE Inspectors. Dates were set which meant most fell in interfaith week in November.

Each event followed a similar pattern, suggested and honed by each group. Individual faith leaders were invited to attend and tell their stories of their activities on the front line in Covid and financial fall out for vulnerable people. The journalists were invited to explain how they work, the stories they were interested in and share their contacts. There were presentations from, mainly, RE advisers and teachers on the religious landscape of the areas and much support from local councils keen to progress their programmes for diversity and inclusion.

These were unique occasions, bringing together people and organisations who share a common vision but who have never met together.

There were around 70 people at each event. Our evaluation showed that trust was developed between faith groups and the media, with the meetings providing a valuable training ground for both local media and faith groups.

- 97% said it improved their confidence in approaching the media
- 92% said it improved their view of the media

**Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022**

- 87% said it improved their view of religion.
- 80% said 'yes' to a future event in their city
- 70% said more willing to engage with the media post-event

We learned that in each location, faith groups didn't know the media and vice versa. Journalists in every city told the audience they had an open door and wanted their stories. Faith groups have since asked for media training to build their skills. The events were a catalyst bringing together teachers, the media, faith representatives, civic leaders, all in a common cause. RE teachers have great local knowledge and are great explainers, worthy of a wider audience. Young people like stories of hope and consume their news almost exclusively on social media.

The project is needed in many other cities and several have asked us to visit them. Our main learning was that as well as expanding into other cities, we need to facilitate follow up meetings including media training to continue the work among those we have already met.

5. The Religion Media Centre Podcast

We have wanted for some time to start our own podcast, offering a way to listen to the work that currently we provide on zoom or the written word. Halley Stewart has generously funded us to provide a monthly podcast over an initial 12 months. Our first was published in January. We have a team of the presenter Hannah Scott Joynt, with guests introducing segments of the show – Roger Bolton does the main interview on a top news story; Leo Devine rounds up news about religion from around the UK; Rosie Dawson discusses key news stories with journalists specialising in religion; Dr Azim Ahmed interviews an academic on a key piece of research; and Paul Kerensa joins us with his friends from the world of showbiz to see where religion and popular culture intersect. The podcasts are available on all major platforms and via our website and we are building a loyal audience.

6. Impact

Through the hard work of Sorcha Connell and Oliver Bowring, our following has steadily increased during the year on Twitter, LinkedIn, through our website, by newsletters and via our YouTube channel.

Our Twitter following grew by 20 per cent. We post on average five stories per day and live tweet our zoom briefings. We achieved 608,000 twitter impressions and the number of visitors to our twitter feed trebled.

Followers to our LinkedIn page have grown four-fold in this year, with 32 per cent based in London

Our new website went live on 15 March 2021 and enables us to better advertise our briefings and other events, as well as showcasing our original editorial content, which can now be searched by for faith category and author. We have an innovative feature with contact details of commentators who have contributed to our work, listing their areas of interest and expertise. The website enables us to attract and sign up new newsletter followers and points to our YouTube channel and social media feeds. The bounce rate of the home page on our new website is down 64 per cent as compared to the old website home page and has continued to decline during the year, which is a sign that the re-design was needed and achieved the objective.

Our mailchimp newsletter following for daily news bulletins, weekly newsletters and weekly media briefings, doubled.

**Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022**

Stories that we have opened up through our daily bulletins are regularly picked up by journalists and broadcasters. Subsequent reports have appeared in the Tablet, Church Times, Guardian, Mail, the Times and through Reach PLC, many regional media platforms throughout the UK.

Anecdotally we know that RE teachers are also amongst our most loyal audience, especially for our daily news bulletins, using current news stories to introduce discussions in their classrooms.

7. Training

We ran a course on reporting religion in Britain, for journalists at Reach PLC through their diversity network group. Our consultants run one to one and group media training for faith groups and this year have engaged with bishops and senior staff in the Church of England; and with senior leaders in the Methodist and United Reformed churches.

In addition, our Creating Connections events in five cities were training events, offering insights into how the media works and giving information about faith groups.

8. Funding

In this financial year, we received generous donations from three foundations – Rank, Porticus and Culham St Gabriel's Trust; we also received grants from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of England. The RMC's ambition is to seek donations from a wide variety of organisations which share our aims

We have a long term strategy which started with a review of possibilities if funding were no object, and then decided on priorities. We judged the most important activities were to continue to reach journalists with daily news bulletins, factsheets, weekly briefings, events and training, within our financial constraints.

The RMC accepts funds from those who support our vision, values and aims and who have a clear governance structure and transparent accountability. The RMC has an appropriate anti bribery policy.

9. Business Development

Our executive chair, Michael Wakelin, is responsible for business development and seeks individuals and organisations who support our aims and are willing to support our work. Our social media consultant Sorcha Connell, also looks after marketing. We created our first brochure this year and this will be an annual ambition.

Our audience

We believe we reached over 75,000 people this year through all our varied forms of work and social media including via events, briefings, newsletters, website and social media. Our aim is to help the media report religion but we have found that many people outside the media have become loyal supporters. We are the only place where news about all major religious traditions and none are found in one site. We appeal to religious education teachers, academics, interfaith groups and people from within the traditions curious about other faiths and keen to forge links. Academics and faith leaders are keen to support us to offer their knowledge and expertise to the media. The top age group accessing our website is 25-34

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022

Religion in Public Life:

During this year we embarked on a collaboration with an American based website, Religion in Public Life. Its aim is to draw together organisations that seek to report on religion in the public square including media groups, academics and charitable organisations. We are the only UK group to be invited to take part and it will give us the opportunity to introduce an American audience to our editorial content, weekly zoom briefings and events that can be joined via zoom. The deal with RPL means that they will give us \$20,000 dollars worth of help and support to help us upload material onto their website.

TRS-UK

We continue to be associated with Theology and Religious Studies UK, which represents academics in higher education throughout the UK. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, we attend each other's annual meetings and include a representative on our advisory group, who helps point us towards academics whose area of study crosses a news story. This year, our new representative is Dr Tim Hutchings, from the University of Nottingham.

10. Statement of public benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

Benefit has been demonstrated to journalists and media professionals who have used material for programmes and articles and built their knowledge through training. Academics and RE teachers have been able to spread their knowledge and expertise through providing insight in articles and contributions to discussions with the media. Faith leaders and media organizations have engaged with the media and each other through events, training and discussions.

Results

The Charity saw a surplus of £5,837 in the year. Net assets at the end of the year were £101,501 in liquid funds.

Reserves Policy

The Charity is keeping future obligations low and currently has no future commitments or overheads as contributors are freelance. The current policy is to retain enough reserves to cover costs and to build up resources to fulfil the Charity's activities at the same level in the ensuing year.

Responsibilities of Trustees regarding the accounts

Charity law requires the Trustees to prepare a receipts and payments account and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year. In addition, they are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which are sufficient to show and explain the Charity transactions and to disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Michael Wakelin
Signed on behalf of the Trustees

 13.8.22

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE - DRAFT ACCOUNTS 2021-2022

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 2021-22

	2022 Unrestricted £	2022 Restricted £	2022 Total £	2021 Unrestricted £	2021 Restricted £	2021 Total £
Receipts						
Grants	100,000	-	100,000	111,000	-	111,000
Website	-	-	-	-	10,000	10,000
Training - 5 Cities Project	-	10,000	10,000	-	7,500	7,500
Podcasts	-	10,560	10,560			
TOTAL	100,000	20,560	120,560	111,000	17,500	128,500
Expenditure						
Project consultancy	19,500	-	19,500	17,500	1,000	18,500
Communications costs	21,451	-	21,451	49,591	-	49,591
Social media and marketing	24,994	-	24,994	20,167	-	20,167
Computers / equipment	6,571	-	6,571	15,244	-	15,244
New website and development	-	-	-	1,053	11,950	13,003
Business development	12,000	-	12,000	13,075	-	13,075
Events	5,887	-	5,887	4,579	-	4,579
Travel	-	-	-	128	-	128
Insurance	417	-	417	409	-	409
Professional fees	574	-	574	1,550	-	1,550
Podcasts	-	4,935	4,935			
Training & 5 Cities Project	336	18,058	18,394	-	-	-
TOTAL	91,730	22,993	114,723	123,296	12,950	136,246
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	8,270	(2,433)	5,837	-12,296	4,550	-7,746
Transfer between funds	-1,558	1,558		-1,950	1,950	
Cash funds at the beginning of year	89,164	6,500	95,664	103,410	0	103,410
Cash Funds at the end of year	95,876	5,625	101,501	89,164	6,500	95,664

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st MARCH 2022

	Note	2022 £	2021 £
ASSETS			
Bank and cash balances		<u>101,501</u>	<u>95,664</u>
Represented by:			
ACCUMULATED FUNDS			
Unrestricted funds		95,876	89,164
Restricted funds	4	5,625	6,500
Total funds at 31 March 2022		<u><u>101,501</u></u>	<u><u>95,664</u></u>

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis. The receipts and payments account is a record of monies received and paid during the financial year. The statement of assets and liabilities is a list of significant possessions and outstanding financial obligations at the end of the financial years. The accounts comply with the appropriate legal requirements.

2. FUNDS

Unrestricted funds comprise those funds which the Trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor.

3. TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING RELATED PARTIES

Included in the accounts is £12,000 paid to the chairman relating to business development.

4. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted income in 2021-22 was £10,000 from Culham St Gabriel's Trust for the Five Cities project and £10,560 from Halley Stewart for the podcasts. Note: £7,500 had already been received from Culham St Gabriel's Trust in the previous year. The £418 from JW3 is netted against the festival costs so is not shown in the accounts.

These accounts were approved by the board of Trustees on and signed on its behalf by Michael Wakelin, chair



13.8.22

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the year ended - 31 March 2022

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Religion Media Centre

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of Religion Media Centre (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2022.

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I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:- 

Date..... 16/08/2022

Keith Halstead MA(Oxon) FCA,
60 Woodcote Hurst
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 7DT

RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE

England & Wales - Charity number 1169562

Accounts

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the period 1st April 2020 - 31 March 2021

Registered Charity Number

1169562

Address

Collaboration House
77-79 Charlotte Street
London
W1T 4PW

Trustees

	<u>Date appointed</u>	
Mr Benedict Samuel Rich	10 th October 2016	
Rev Christopher Landau	10 th October 2016	
Mr Michael Wakelin (chair)	10 th October 2016	
Mr Kevin Jaquiss	20 th March 2017	
Roger Bolton	26 th June 2019	
Alison Gow	26 th November 2020	
Lois Lee	26 th November 2020	
Hussein Kesvani	26 th November 2020	
Ms Remona Aly	8 th February 2018	resigned 26 th November 2020

Accountant

Andrew Jennings MA FCA

Independent Examiner

Mr Keith Halstead MA (Oxon) FCA

Bank

Cooperative Bank, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the period 1st April 2020 - 31 March 2021

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Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the period 1st April 2020 - 31 March 2021

Trustees Report

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Governance

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Its constitution states its objects are: ‘To advance education of the public in world religion, including the Baha’i faith; Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam; Jainism; Judaism; Sikhism and Zoroastrianism by: the dissemination of accurate, authoritative, independent and impartial information and research about religious faiths to the media; and the provision of media training to religious organisations.’

It is an impartial and independent organization aiming to help the media report and understand religion and beliefs. It has no editorial line, nor does it promote any one religion, or religious belief in general. Instead, it exists to provide accurate, timely and relevant information to the media, enabling the public to be better informed.

The trustees have met five times during the year. Remona Aly resigned as trustee in November 2020 due to her over busy schedule. Three new trustees were appointed in that month: Alison Gow, Audience and Content Director North West, Reach PLC and President, Society of Editors; Dr Lois Lee, Senior Lecturer Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kent, and Principal Investigator on the Understanding Unbelief programme; Hussein Kesvani, journalist, editor, author and producer.

Our Trustees are responsible for compliance with charity law and with the RMC’s own charitable objectives. They set the RMC’s strategic direction, oversee its work, monitor progress and prioritise the RMC’s activities. They support the team of consultants and freelancers who work on projects and content; monitor and supervise fund raising initiatives and advise on marketing.

The advisory board was reconfigured to reflect the many people who volunteer their talent and advice in support of our work. They are known simply as advisers and are invited frequently to contribute to our thinking and activities:

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the period 1st April 2020 - 31 March 2021

Dr Azim Ahmed	Deputy Director at the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK
Remona Aly	Director of Communications of Exploring Islam Foundation
Dr Kate Christopher	Director Teach:RE at Culham St Gabriel
Andrew Copson	CEO of Humanists UK
Prof Adam Dinham	Professor of Faith & Public Policy, Goldsmiths
Caroline Donne	Freelance radio producer
Rabbi Alex Goldberg	Barrister and rabbi, Dean of the College of Chaplains Surrey University
Katie Harrison	Social & Public Affairs Adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury
Dr Sarah Harvey	Senior Research Officer, Inform
James Irving	St Bride's Fleet Street Head of Finance and Fundraising
Andrew Jennings	Accountant and finance adviser
Rev Tony Miles	Superintendent Minister Methodist Central Hall, Westminster
Prof Jolyon Mitchell	Professor of Communications, Arts and Religion, Edinburgh University
Dr Suzanne Newcombe	Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, Open University; Director Inform.
Canon Ed Newell	Principal and Chief Executive of Cumberland Lodge
Prof Stephen Pattison	Former Professor of Religion Ethics and Practice Birmingham University
Rev George Pitcher	Journalist, author and an Anglican priest
Eleanor Puttock	Former Digital Evangelism Manager Diocese of Ely, trainee chaplain
Rabbi Jonathan Romain	Rabbi at Maidenhead Synagogue
Jazvir Singh	Barrister, Chair of City Sikhs, Honorary Fellow, Edward Cadbury Centre
Dr Jasjit Singh	Associate Professor, University of Leeds
Nick Spencer	Senior Fellow Theos think tank
Judy Trotter	Head of Adult Education & Learning, JW3 Centre
Karl Wightman	UK Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

1. Activities, achievements and performance:

Through the Covid-19 pandemic the RMC has adapted and expanded its work online. The lockdowns began two months after receipt of a generous grant settlement from the Porticus Foundation, the first instalment of a four-year plan. This allowed us to scale up our activities and adapt to the new online environment.

Editorial:

As lockdown began in March 2020, the RMC started a daily bulletin of religion news sent to a targeted audience of journalists and supporters, which has grown throughout the year. Usually consisting of at least six stories about religion from the UK and around the world. This is read by key correspondents and specialist reporters and producers. It has gained traction during the year and has encouraged a flow of information into the Centre for inclusion in the newsletter.

A team of freelance journalists and sub editors produce news stories, analysis and features, as well as contributing to fact sheets, the majority of which are written by academics. The team includes well established religious affairs correspondents such as Rosie Dawson, Tim Wyatt, Christopher

Religion Media Centre
Accounts for the period 1st April 2020 - 31 March 2021

Lamb, Andrew Brown and Catherine Pepinster, alongside experienced reporters with specialist knowledge, Lianne Kolirin and Anna Averkiou. Ruth Peacock has continued her engagement as editorial consultant.

Among the top stories covered this year were:

- Bishops lining up to criticise Dominic Cummings for breaking lockdown rules.
- The major impact of Covid-19 on the religious landscape of the UK with changed worship, festivals and increased activities to help people in need.
- The rise of QAnon in the United States and anti-vaxx conspiracy theories worldwide.
- The white evangelical pro Trump supporters and how they relate to UK denominational divides.
- The appointment of the first female Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain; and the passing of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks.

In May 2020 we were able to appoint a freelance social media manager, Sorcha Connell, to expand our social media and online presence. During the year our twitter following doubled, we started a presence on Linked In, set up a YouTube channel and started three mailouts - a weekly newsletter, daily news bulletins and weekly zoom briefings – which have grown during the year.

The trustees agreed to a redesign of the website by Musicarta Ltd, making it more secure and more agile and trying to achieve more sustained interest and showcase our expanding bank of editorial material. The Rank Foundation generously awarded us a sum towards the cost and the website went live on 15 March 2021. The top age range for people visiting our website is 25-34.

Among the many new features is a bespoke page listing commentators on various aspects of religion, all of whom have contributed to our content and work. This is to help journalists reporting on a story and needing expert comment to aid understanding. We continue to expand our list of commentators from universities and faith groups.

Events

Our third Religion Media Festival “Exploring Belief”, which was scheduled for March 2020, had to be cancelled due to the lockdown, which was announced two weeks beforehand. This was very disappointing as we had a full programme ready to run. However, we did run the festival online in April 2021, in collaboration, again, with the JW3 centre in north London, with a packed programme of well known and established speakers including Lord Rowan Williams. Ticket sales were lower, but our presence was maintained.

Our business plan included holding workshops for journalists explaining stories in the news and we moved this online in March 2020, starting, now well established, weekly zoom briefings which have included hundreds of guest speakers. They are invited to give an opinion and contribute to a discussion on a story behind the headlines to an audience of journalists and RMC supporters who wish to be better informed. All the sessions are recorded for our YouTube channel which has grown 400% in a year. Our technical support is provided by Oliver Bowring from Musicarta Ltd. The highest audience was a zoom about white evangelicals and racism in America which was viewed 29,000 times. Our hosts have included broadcasters Rosie Dawson, Roger Bolton, Trevor Barnes and William Crawley. We have produced some zooms in collaboration with external organisations launching a report, such as the Woolf Institute, SOAS, Cambridge University and Open Doors. This is an area we would like to expand next year.

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Our annual lecture is scheduled for autumn 2021, when we hope we can meet face to face.

Training

We put on four training events this year – media training for faith groups and Reporting Religion for journalists. Our most successful ventures have been when an organisation invites us in to offer training for their teams. We hope to expand this next year.

In December, Culham St Gabriel gave us a generous award to put on events in five cities in the UK where faith groups will meet media professionals, to aid understanding and create better networks. These will follow a pattern set by an event in Cardiff in 2016 which proved beneficial to all involved. In this project, RE teachers are closely involved in the planning and roll out of the events. The RMC and Culham St Gabriel share the similar goal of enhancing religious literacy in society. So far, our plans are progressing in Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Plymouth and Nottingham with a view to delivering the project in autumn 2021.

Impact

Our weekly zoom briefings have included the faith minister Lord Greenhalgh; Faith engagement adviser, Colin Bloom; Cardinal Vincent Nichols; the Archbishop of York; Bishops from Manchester, Leeds and Ripon; leaders of other denominations and faiths; all religious affairs correspondents from major publications.

Stories we have contributed to or produced have appeared in major religious publications, national titles and Reach PLC regional titles. Content has been used by BBC reporters and the Sunday programme on Radio 4.

We contributed to the APPG Religion in the Media report “Learning to Listen” which concluded that religious literacy is essential for the media to produce great journalism. We were pleased to be quoted throughout and our work held up as a model for training and briefing journalists, which the APPG believes needs to be formalised as essential so that all journalists engage.

2. Funding:

In this financial year, we received generous donations from three foundations – Rank, Porticus and Culham St Gabriel - and our supporter Dr Neil Harbury as well as smaller donations from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of England. The RMC’s ambition is to seek donations from a wide variety of organisations, capping the amount from any one institution as a proportion of its annual income in order to protect the Centre from any undue influence. Our chair, Michael Wakelin, took on an executive role in business development to build stronger relationships and secure our long term future.

Payments of fees were made to people acting as consultants, or individual freelancers, or small companies.

The RMC has an anti-bribery policy and accepts funds from those who support our vision, values and aims and who have a clear governance structure and transparent accountability.

Our business case is reviewed during the year.

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Statement of public benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

Benefit has been demonstrated to journalists and media professionals who have used material for programmes and articles and built their knowledge through training. Academics and RE teachers have been able to spread their knowledge and expertise through providing insight in articles and contributions to discussions with the media. Faith leaders and media organizations have engaged with the media and each other through events, training and discussions.

Results


The Charity saw a deficit of £7,746 in the year. Net assets at the end of the year were £95,664 in liquid funds.

Reserves Policy

The Charity is keeping future obligations low and currently has no future commitments or overheads as contributors are freelance. The current policy is to retain enough reserves to cover costs and to build up resources to fulfil the Charity's activities at the same level in the ensuing year.

Responsibilities of Trustees regarding the accounts

Charity law requires the Trustees to prepare a receipts and payments account and a statement of assets and liabilities for each financial year. In addition, they are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which are sufficient to show and explain the Charity transactions and to disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.


Michael Wakelin
Signed on behalf of the Trustees

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RELIGION MEDIA CENTRE - ACCOUNTS 2020-2021

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 2020-21

	2021 Unrestricted £	2021 Restricted £	2021 Total £	2020 Unrestricted £	2020 Restricted £	2020 Total £
RECEIPTS						
Grants	111,000	-	111,000	120,000	800	120,800
Website	-	10,000	10,000	-	-	-
Training	-	7,500	7,500	-	-	-
TOTAL	111,000	17,500	128,500	120,000	800	120,800
Expenditure						
Project consultancy	17,500	1,000	18,500	12,500	-	12,500
Communications costs	49,591	-	49,591	13,448	-	13,448
Social media development	18,468	-	18,468	-	-	-
Computers / equipment	15,244	-	15,244	3,042	-	3,042
New website and development	1,053	11,950	13,003	338	-	338
Business development	13,075	-	13,075	3,759	-	3,759
Events	4,579	-	4,579	3,830	9,676	13,506
Marketing	1,698	-	1,698	340	-	340
Travel	128	-	128	180	-	180
Insurance	409	-	409	409	-	409
Professional fees	1,550	-	1,550	122	-	122
Training	-	-	-	385	-	385
Total	123,296	12,950	136,246	38,353	9,676	48,029
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	-12,296	4,550	-7,746	81,647	- 8,876	72,771
Transfer between funds	-1,950	1,950	-	126	126	-
Cash funds at the beginning of year	103,410	0	103,410	21,889	8,750	30,639
Cash Funds at the end of year	89,164	6,500	95,664	103,410	0	103,410

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st MARCH 2021

	Note	2021 £	2020 £
ASSETS			
Bank and cash balances		95,664	103,410
Represented by :			
ACCUMULATED FUNDS			
Unrestricted funds		89,164	103,410
Restricted funds	4	6,500	-
Total funds at 31 March 2021		95,664	103,410

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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis. The receipts and payments account is a record of monies received and paid during the financial year. The statement of assets and liabilities is a list of significant possessions and outstanding financial obligations at the end of the financial years. The accounts comply with the appropriate legal requirements.

2. FUNDS

Unrestricted funds comprise those funds which the Trustees are free to use for any purpose in furtherance of the charitable objects.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by the donor.

3. TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING RELATED PARTIES

Included in the accounts is £12,000 paid to the chairman relating to work on business development. £846.25 was paid to Rebecca Smith, niece of Ruth Peacock, for graphic design work for the festival and lecture, and creating the revised logo.

4. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted income in 2020-21 represented £10,000 for the website development, which went live on 15 March 2021; and £7,500 from Culham St Gabriel for initial planning for the project to establish events for the media and faith leaders in five UK cities.

These accounts were approved by the board of Trustees on 7th July 2021 and signed on its behalf by Michael Wakelin, chair



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Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Religion Media Centre

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of Religion Media Centre (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report

The Charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent Examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:- 

Date..... 31/08/2021

Keith Halstead MA(Oxon) FCA,
60 Woodcote Hurst
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 7DT