

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

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## **Trustees Report**

The trustees are pleased to present the annual report of the Religion Media Centre from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### Governance

The Religion Media Centre is a Charitable Incorporated Organization, charity number 1169562, registered on 10<sup>th</sup> 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 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:



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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



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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, Sorchia 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 £
<b>RECEIPTS</b>						
Grants	111,000	-	111,000	120,000	800	120,800
Website	-	10000	10000	-	-	-
Training	-	7500	7500	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>111,000</b>	<b>17,500</b>	<b>128,500</b>	<b>120,000</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>120,800</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Project consultancy	17,500	1000	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	3042	-	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
<b>Total</b>	<b>123,296</b>	<b>12,950</b>	<b>136,246</b>	<b>38,353</b>	<b>9,676</b>	<b>48,029</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year</b>	<b>-12,296</b>	<b>4,550</b>	<b>-7,746</b>	<b>81,647</b>	<b>- 8,876</b>	<b>72,771</b>
<b>Transfer between funds</b>	<b>-1,950</b>	<b>1,950</b>		<b>- 126</b>	<b>126</b>	
<b>Cash funds at the beginning of year</b>	<b>103,410</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>103,410</b>	<b>21,889</b>	<b>8,750</b>	<b>30,639</b>
<b>Cash Funds at the end of year</b>	<b>89,164</b>	<b>6,500</b>	<b>95,664</b>	<b>103,410</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>103,410</b>

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31st MARCH 2021**

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



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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 7<sup>th</sup> 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