

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

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

Contents

Page 3:	Trustees Report
Page 7:	Statement of Public benefits
Page 8:	Receipts & Payments Account
Page 9:	Notes to the Accounts
Page 10:	Independent Examiners Report

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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 Bassey 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.

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

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

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

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	- 672	- 25,849	- 47,153	- 73,002
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 16,399		-
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		

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

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

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

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