MODERN CHURCH

England & Wales · Charity number 281573

Details

Other names	M C U, THE MODERN CHURCHPEOPLE'S UNION
Status	Registered
Legal form	Other
Registered	1981-01-15
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	97 Court View Stonehouse Stonehouse Gloucestershire GL10 3PJ
Phone	08453451909
Email	office@modernchurch.org.uk
Website	www.modernchurch.org.uk

Activities

Objects: THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC, IN PARTICULAR THROUGH (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):(A) THE PROMOTION OF OPEN AND CRITICAL STUDY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND ITS RELEVANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD; AND(B) OFFERING RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS IN PARISHES, INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC LIFE TO SUPPORT AN OPEN-MINDED AND THOUGHTFUL APPROACH TO MATTERS OF FAITH AND RELIGION

Activities: Modern Church promotes liberal Christian theology, offering debate on religious issues, embracing the spirit of freedom & informed enquiry. It seeks to involve the Christian faith in an ongoing search for truth by interpreting traditional doctrine in the light of present day understanding. It encourages debate through its journal, newsletter and books, conferences, website and local groups.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Religious Activities
- **Who:** Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, Other Defined Groups, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£39,613	£62,691	-	-
2023-12-31	£39,624	£73,775	-	-
2022-12-31	£35,627	£77,799	-	-
2021-12-31	£27,383	£56,354	-	-
2020-12-31	£31,836	£68,053	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
PROFESSOR ELAINE LOUISE GRAHAM	Chair	2021-07-22
ANTHONY GRAHAM BENINGTON WOOLLARD		
Hugh Bryant		2022-07-20
Joseph Samuel Priestley		2024-09-04
Professor Adrian Thatcher		2015-07-14
Rev Anne-Marie Caroline Kramer		2025-12-05
Rev Diane Kutar		2022-07-20
Rev Donald Roger Witts		2024-09-04
Rev Lorraine Cavanagh		2014-07-15

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MODERN CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 281573

Accounts

Modern Church
faith in the world

Annual Report of the Trustees for the year 2024

to be presented to the Annual General Meeting on

18th October 2025 at 4.00 pm

At the St George's Centre, Leeds

Office address:
97 Court View, Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, GL10 3PJ

Website: www.modernchurch.org.uk

Email: office@modernchurch.org.uk

Registered charity no: 281573

ABOUT MODERN CHURCH

faith in the world

We understand that

- genuine faith is committed to the search for truth, wherever it comes from
- it is possible to think and talk about God in ways that make sense in our time and culture

We encourage

- open discussion: freedom to explore ideas, ask questions and change our minds without fear of disapproval
- critical scholarship: keeping up to date with good research, examining the implications of new insights and discoveries
- willingness to change: so that what we believe now can be expressed in the things our churches do and say.

We expect our theology to be

- public: talking the language of ordinary people, not that of a religious club
- relevant: engaging with what is going on in society, informing our faith and how we live
- respectful: willing to learn from others, within and outside Christianity, since we accept that we don't have all the answers.

Public benefit

As a charitable organisation we consider that our objects have the following public benefits:

- we have a duty within our present-day society to present Christianity in a way which can be understood by ordinary people
- we encourage all church people, both ordained and lay, to play a full part in the governance and activities of their churches and foster greater engagement with the mission of the churches to support the poor, sick and needy in society
- by engaging in research and study we can help our fellow Christians come to a deeper understanding of their faith and how it has developed our approach to theology will encourage people of all faiths to better understand one another thus promoting constructive relations between the faiths.

Report from the Chair of Trustees

Since I became Chair of Trustees in July 2021 Modern Church has been involved in a thorough review of its activities. Some of this arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we realised that traditional patterns of face-to-face meeting had been superseded by online methods of communication.

While we have welcomed opportunities to return to in-person gatherings – most notably at our annual conference and AGM and some Council sessions – we have found, like many similar organisations, that virtual meetings have enabled us to make our events both more accessible and ambitious. By our AGM in July 2024, although we had returned to High Leigh conference centre, our forward planning was beginning to reflect this more 'hybrid' approach to all our activities.

Over the past year, our programme has reflected this diversity of approaches.

We hold regular online meetings (including the reinstatement of our regular Forum discussions for members) and webinars (often in collaboration with partner organisations, including *Church Times* and SCM Press). Our Public Square Group has combined in-person meetings with online debates. We also offer a choice of ways to read our written output, either through web-based blogs and internet and hard copy access to *Modern Believing* as well as regular mailings of *Signs of the Times*.

We hope this mix of outputs enables us to reach the widest audience possible. Our recruitment figures suggest that alongside our long-term supporters we are also steadily attracting new members, many of whom may never have discovered Modern Church without these new modes of outreach. In the process, we continue to meet the objectives we set for ourselves in 2022: to diversify our membership, to be more co-ordinated and responsive in our offerings, to support members wherever they are on their faith journeys, offering considered and informed comment on public issues and to work collaboratively on contemporary issues with other progressive Christian organisations.

As ever, I am grateful to our staff and officers – Alison Webster, Nic Tall, Castor Bending and Diane Kutar; Adrian Thatcher and Victoria Turner (*Modern Believing*) and Anthony Woolard (*Signs of the Times*) and to all those, past and present, who have served as Trustees or Council members. I am confident that we can continue to uphold our enduring commitment to open and inclusive Christianity while finding new ways of engaging with our changing and troubled world.

Professor Elaine Graham FBA
Chair of Trustees

Modern Church General Secretary's Report 2024

Introduction
In 2024, Modern Church continued its mission to promote progressive Christian theology through a series of events, publications, and collaborative efforts. Our activities aimed to foster inclusive dialogue, address contemporary challenges, and provide platforms for diverse theological perspectives.

Annual Conference

Our annual conference in this year was the final one to adopt a 3-day, fully catered, residential format at High Leigh Conference Centre. Previous experiences of disruption due to the Covid pandemic and extreme weather events have led us to plan for a different approach from 2025. However, the event was hugely successful and creative. Organised in partnership with the ecumenical Mission Theology Apologetics Group, the theme was 'Finding the Sacred in the 21st Century'. Participants were resourced to explore a vast range of contemporary forms of spirituality, with a diverse collection of speakers, through a programme held together by Prof John Drane and Dr Anne Richards.

General Election Activity

Contributing to theology in the public square has been a key commitment for Modern Church, so we embraced the 2024 General Election with enthusiasm. We contributed to the churches' and Citizens UK's voter registration campaign, and raised key election issues through two political theology webinars, jointly organised with the Church Times. (contributors included Jonathan Cox, Graeme Smith, Jenny Leith, Shermara Fletcher, Bishop Mike Royal and Tim Norwood. The chair was Elaine Graham)

In addition, we ran a special series of blogs on justice themes during May and June 2024 with contributors such as Martin Palmer on the climate crisis, Stef Benstead on disabled rights, Inderjit Bhogal on immigration, Bishop David Walker on housing and homelessness, and myself on the need to mobilise voters.

Other Blogs

Our interventions on urgent political issues were by no means confined to our pre-election material. Through the year we published on the racist riots (Raj Patel), the unfolding crisis in Palestine (Marika Rose), the role of Christianity in the rise of the far right (Helen Paynter), world poverty (Sabina Alkire), the rise of Artificial Intelligence (Tim Norwood), Assisted Dying (James Woodward), the ecological crisis (Neil Whitehouse).

Our blogs also explored issues of ecclesiastical and theological importance: Anne Richards on spiritual abuse; Stephen Parsons on the future of safeguarding in the church; Adrian Thatcher on the persistence of homophobia; Simon Cross on 'decline' in the church; Angela Sheard on why the church needs an 'anti-growth coalition'; Adrian Thatcher on the theological failings of the Makin Report; Miranda Threlfall-Homes on how the church can and does change doctrine; Martine Oborne on the lack of women's equality in the Church of England; Niamh Hardman on the value of the Greenbelt Festival, and Joe Priestley on the work of Nick Cave.

We have averaged two blogs per month, with a diverse set of contributors.

Members' Forum

A priority identified in 2023/4 was the need to revivify the Modern Church Forum as a place for safe and open discussion of theological and spiritual issues. The latter part of 2024 saw the first two of these (co-facilitated by Elaine Graham, Lorraine Cavanagh and myself), setting a pattern of meeting every other month, with themes generated from our other activities.

Other Events

2024 was the 40th Anniversary of the groundbreaking TV series 'The Sea of Faith', written and presented by Don Cupitt. The Chair of Modern Church, together with Prof Graeme Smith, were responsible for a major research project on its impact, with two conferences held in 2024 (one in Cambridge, and one at Gladstone's Library), to which Modern Church made a contribution. There was also a special edition of Modern Believing.

We began the year with a fascinating panel conversation on 'Caribbean Contextual theology', with Carlton Turner, Evie Vernon and Stephen Jennings. In May we welcomed Jane Shaw to give an online lecture on 'Mysticism and its Possibilities', and in October we hosted a panel on 'The Church, the Far Right, and the Claim to Christianity' (with Helen Paynter, Maria Power and Raj Patta). As Kim Leadbeater's Private Member's Bill made its way through parliament, we hosted another joint webinar with the Church Times, this time on 'Can a Good Death be Assisted'? Panelists were James Woodward, Joanna Collicutt, Cassius Francis and Katie Tupling, and Elaine Graham was in the Chair. Finally, as the year closed, we discussed the power of the Mammon System with theologian and critic of neoliberal capitalism, Bruce Rogers-Vaughn.

Conclusion

The year 2024 was marked by a commitment to fostering inclusive and progressive theological discourse. Through collaborative events, insightful publications, and active digital engagement, Modern Church continued to serve as a platform for diverse theological perspectives, addressing contemporary challenges and promoting a more inclusive vision of Christianity.

Alison Webster
General Secretary

Modern Believing Annual Report 2024

Journal Content

There were 22 articles and 110 reviews in volume 65 in the usual 4 editions:

65.1 'Deconstructing Racism in the Church' was derived from presentations at the 2023 annual Modern Church conference of the same name.

65.2 'Theology and Poetry' contained 5 outstanding articles, including one from Rowan Williams.

65.3 'The Sea of Faith', edited by Elaine Graham and Graeme Smith, presented articles on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the BBC TV programme of that name, expressing both appreciation and criticism.

65.4 'The Expanding Horizons of Interreligious Theology', edited by Alan Race, took up some of the challenges associated with religious plurality.

Subscriptions

A welcome increase in subscriptions over 2023 has been recorded (figures taken from the LUP 2024 journal report):

	2020	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Institutional Subscriptions	58	48	47	45	43
Modern Church Members	223	244	236	218	247
Total	**281**	**292**	**283**	**263**	**290**

(LUP calculates the number of subscribers on an annual basis. MC calculates the number of subscribers on a monthly basis. Office records confirm the increase (February **194**: May **215**; August **226**; November **229**).

Administration of Membership

Total membership of Modern Church in September 2024 stood at 246, the highest since 2019, with 225 subscribing to Modern Believing.

From 2024, Modern Church took membership processing back in-house, providing LUP with membership details so as to fulfil the distribution of copies to society members. Meanwhile, online access is provided via the Modern Church website, https://modernchurch.org.uk/journal-portal . The new arrangements have made joining easier and have led to an increase in the number of our readers.

Readership

On the LUP website there were 21,370 unique page views in 2024, an increase of over 7% (19,971 in 2023).

There were 1,813 full text downloads, an increase of over 12% (1,610) in 2023.

Top Institutions. The table below shows the top five institutions which downloaded the greatest number of articles in 2023 and 2024.

2023	**2024**
Modern Church	Modern Church
Bodleian Library	KU Leuven Bibliotheken
Graduate Theological Union	Bodleian Library
University of St Andrews	University of Birmingham
University of Exeter	Queens Foundation

Top Countries. The table below shows the top five countries that visited the journal homepage in 2023 and 2024.

2023	**2024**
United States	Singapore
Singapore	United States
United Kingdom	Israel
India	United Kingdom
Poland	Germany

Top Articles

Rank	**Title**	**Author**	**Volume**	**Total Requests**
1	Gauntlet at the Lychgate: How and Why is the Church of England Racist?	Sanjee Perera	65.1	147
2	The Future of Sexuality Debates in the Church	Susannah Cornwall	62.1*	132
3	Sex, Gender and Human Identity: Science and Theology	Christopher C. H. Cook	62.1	95
4	Book Reviews		65.2	42
5	Book Reviews		62.1	41
6	Editorial: The Sea of Faith	Elaine Graham, Graeme Smith	65.3	38
7	Performing Faith Differently	Alison Webster	62.1	36
8	The Sea of Faith in Context	Mark D. Chapman	65.3	35

9	Theology and the Public Square: Mapping the Field	Elaine Graham	61.1	34
10	The Sea of Faith 40 Years On	Elaine Graham, Graeme Smith	65.3	31

(62.1 was the online free to read issue in 2024)

Analysis

- An increase of 7.5% in regular subscribers through MC membership
- Growing online readership through the LUP website
- The UK's position (4th) in top countries indicating growing international reach
- The continuing popularity of race, and sex and gender, as topics for download.

Miscellanous

Punctuality. Copy was received by LUP for each edition, in accordance with the agreed schedule, and all 4 editions were distributed early.

'Spotlight'. ATLA published an article about the journal, 'Spotlight on Modern Believing' (using copy provided by the Editor and Officers of MB). It provided an exciting opportunity to commend the journal to an international readership.

AI. The Trustees agreed that our publisher, Liverpool University Press, be authorized to submit journal content to companies training Large Language Models.

ORCiD. The Press has joined ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID), and encourages all authors to claim (free of charge) their ORCID unique persistent identifier (PID).

Translation. One of our articles, M. Lawler and T. Salzman's, 'Usury and Homosexual Behaviour: Parallel Theological Tracks?', 54.3 (2013) was translated into Czech, and appeared in the Czech theological journal *Salve: a review for theology and spirituality*.

Gender Imbalance. I regret the 15m / 7f imbalance among article authors. Also the clear majority of authors is ethnically white. Consultation with members of the Editorial Board and Editorial Team may be necessary to mitigate imbalances over time.

Finally,

Thanks to

- Victoria Turner, Reviews Editor, for providing copy on time and activating a new range of reviewer contacts;
- all the authors (for their willingness to write *gratis* for the journal, their support for the journal and its aims; and the excellent quality of their work);
- the journal staff of Liverpool University Press for their help, promptness, efficiency and professionalism in producing the journal;
- the Editorial Team for their counsel and advice;
- the continuing and new members of the Editorial Board for their role in guaranteeing the journal's academic integrity;
- and the Trustees for their interest in and support for the journal.

Adrian Thatcher
Managing Editor

Modern Church Membership Report

In late 2023 Modern Church overhauled its membership system, taking everything in house after a period of management by LUP. The former annual payment system, either by direct debit or one off payment, was discontinued for new members and replaced by a monthly direct debit system. The previous distinction between full members and affiliate members was also discontinued, with all making regular financial contributions to Modern Church being treated as a member, whether they subscribed to the journal or not.

While there were concerns that a change to the membership system would lead to some members dropping off, these concerns did not materialise. An apparent drop off in members at the end of 2023 was largely due to some members who joined with a one off payment needing to be chased up and transferred onto the new system. Through the early months of 2024 most were signed up again, and a steady flow of new members continued to nudge up the overall membership figures. By the end of the year overall membership numbers had increased to 243, the highest level of full membership seen since 2019.

Subscription Type	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Members	321	316	251	215	208	213	187	236
Life Members	9	9	8	8	8	7	7	7
Total Memberships	330	325	259	223	216	220	194	243

It should be noted in the figures above that the affiliate membership scheme which ran from 2021 to 2023 has not been included. Most affiliates were only members for a year and securing their renewal was a time consuming and often fruitless task. Under the new system those joining Modern Church but opting out of receiving the journal are retained through regular direct debit payments, ensuring a steady income without the administrative burden of chasing up to secure a renewal.

On a month by month basis so far in 2025 membership numbers have continued to steadily rise as follows:

	Jan-25	**Feb-25**	**Mar-25**	**Apr-25**	**May-25**	**Jun-25**	**Jul-25**	**Aug-25**	**Sep-25**
Total Memberships	243	246	249	249	249	251	253	257	261

This sustained increase in membership indicates that allowing people to sign up directly as members, leading to direct contact between them and Modern Church from day one of subscription, is working. The renewed and diversified content, combining excellent regular publications with publicly available online content, is the underlying basis for attracting the increasing number of members.

Nic Tall
Administrator

Signs of the Times

The flow of material for our quarterly journal has continued at a pleasing rate, and there is some evidence that it is encouraging new and renewed membership of Modern Church. Many contributions have come from members of the Public Square Group, in response to the current state of our nation; but topics from the changing nature of secularism to environmental issues, and the Church's fault-lines over missiology and sexuality, have figured also.

Along with our website, our blog, and an increasing diversity of online events, *Signs* has more than ever become our principal "shop window". As well as being the principal material distributed as a benefit of membership, it can be made available to enquirers as well as those attending other events in which we are involved. If anyone would like extra copies to distribute to enquirers in their own church or neighbourhood, or at events which they attend, they should request these from our administrator (office@modernchurch.org.uk).

Articles by members (and indeed others) about contemporary issues likely to be of interest to our readership, are always welcome, though it may not always be possible to find space for them at once. More responses to those articles would also be of great value. Our book reviews editor Terry Drummond is always looking for books to review and people to review them, and your suggestions to terry.drummond@hotmail.com will be appreciated.

Thanks are due to Terry, and to the other members of the editorial team – our General Secretary, our Communications Officer, and Rosalind Lund, Lorraine Cavanagh and Helen Burnett – and to our designer Richard Remington; but above all to our contributors.

Anthony Woollard
SoTT Editor

Treasurer's Report

The accounts enclosed herewith have been approved by the trustees and signed off without amendment by the Independent Examiner.

Membership management has now fully transferred in-house. It can be seen that subscription income is down on 2023. This may be a timing of receipts issue as previously we would have received the majority from LUP in November, but we are now receiving spread out over the whole year and as such we will not really have an accurate representation until we have a full year of the new model.

LUP have confirmed they will be invoicing in the new year based on circa 245 members which is a definite increase in membership on recent years. It should be noted though that LUP only run on a calendar year basis, whilst we have members joining and leaving at any point. Therefore, 245 will be the total number of people who were a subscriber to Modern Believing at some point in 2024. We have had a small number of cancellations towards the end of 2024, with some people choosing to cancel their direct debits. We have 243 members of whom 223 receive Modern Believing. Of those 243, 8 are life members of

whom six still receive the journal. We also have six who receive the journal at Modern Church's cost (three staff members, Victoria Turner as Reviews Editor, two Council members).

The 2024 figures do not include an invoice from LUP for the production of the journal. This is estimated at £7,350 (245@ £30 per head) which is a substantial increase on the 2023 costs.

If we adjust the deficit for this, we have a deficit of £30k which is £4k less than 2023.

We did come very close to breaking even on conference and with a £2k loss over all on residentials (conferences/council) this is a good outcome. If this is removed from the deficit (adjusted for LUP invoice) then we have a position where the deficit is principally the expenditure on Legacy projects of £25k as the agreed amount every year for five years. If we can eliminate the residential losses in the coming year then we would be breaking even on our operations aside from Legacy expenditure.

Whilst we have drawn down £30k from reserves, the share price of investments held has risen again resulting in a revaluation and the impact on reserves is therefore only £19k. This cannot continue for ever, obviously, but with a reserves balance of just over £463k I consider we are in a sound financial position going into 2025.

Diane Kutar
Treasurer

Receipts & Payments Accounts to 31 December 2024

		2024	2024	2023	2023
Receipts					
Subscriptions	Subscriptions (Note 1)	11490		15037	
	Subscriptions Affiliate	0		307	
	Gift Aid	0		567	
			11490		15885
Investment Income		12442		13239	
			12442		13239
Conferences	Annual Conferences (Note 2)	12318		8328	
	Council Residential	1130		1437	
	Other Conferences	0		0	
			13448		9764
Miscellaneous	Donations	765		20	
	Publications (Note 3)	956		313	
	Other	512		404	
			2233		737
	Total Receipts		**39613**		**39624**
Payments					
Legacy Project	General Secretary	17837		18620	
(Note 5)	Projects (CT insert, MB launch, Sponsorships)	0		0	
	General Secretary Expenses	657		404	
			18495		19024
Publications	Modern Believing (Note 4)	236		4167	
	SOTT (Legacy Project) (Note 6)	5527		6296	
	Editors	3750		2500	
	Other Publications	330		0	
	Legacy Relaunch	0		0	
			9843		12963
Communications	Communications Officer	6235		7308	
	Advertising	25		0	
	Website costs	1514		467	
			7774		7753
Admin	Administrator	7358		7358	
	Accounting Fees	480		570	
	Trustees Room hire	689		539	
	Admin expenses	2608		3112	
	Miscellaneous	0		185	
			11135		
					11764
Conferences	Annual Conference (Note 1)	12658		16945	
	Council Residential	1447		4344	
	Other	1340		982	
			15445		22271
	Total Payments		**62691**		**73775**
Surplus/deficit			**-23078**		**-34150**

Bank and Investment Balances at 31 December 2023			**2024**	**2024**	**2023**	**2023**
FUNDS STATEMENT - Members' Funds						
Opening Balances						
Undesignated			175229		142476	
Designated		Reserves	263429		263429	
	(Note 5)	Legacy Projects	40364		66006	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	821		821	472732
Surplus/deficit Cash Flow			-23078		-34150	
Unrealised holdings gains/losses	(Note 7)		10625		41261	7111
Closing Funds			**467390**			**479843**
Represented by						
Undesignated			179713		175229	
Designated		Reserves	263429		263429	
	(Note 5)	Legacy Projects	23428		40364	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	821		821	
Total Funds			**467390**			**479843**
Members' Assets						
CAF Bank			19447		12457	
Paypal			122		263	
CCLA Deposit			1465		1391	14111
CCLA Shares - revaluation 31/12/2024	(Note 7)		446356	**467390**	465731	**479843**
Total				**467390**		**479843**

Notes

1 Subscriptions are now all managed inhouse and processed via GoCardless

2 Expenses: With the change in structure to conferences the conference figure is now all relating to 2024.

3 Modern Church receives payments from LUP in relation to subscriptions from libraries and institutions, referred to as royalties

4 We have yet to be invoiced for the publication costs of Modern Believing in 2024

5 Legacy Projects - legacy expenditure in 2024 relates to the work and remuneration of the General Secretary and SOTT (see Note 6). Of the funds allocated to legacy projects just under £25k remains.

6 Signs of the Times (SOTT) continues to show high costs since a re-design in 2019 and is considered as part of our Legacy Project but we have seen some savings this year. Included in this is ordering additional copies for events as they are a popular give-away.

7 We have once more benefited from an increase in our investment funds due to a revaluation in the share values. Whilst not as significant as previous years it has offset the deficit of £23k by circa £11k

Independent Examiner's Report
to the Trustees of Modern Church
For the year ended 31st December 2024
Registered Charity no. 281573

Independent examiner's statement
I report on the accounts of the Modern Church ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on the attached pages and show a cash deficit of £23,078, together with funds totalling £467,390 at the year end.
Responsibilities and basis of report

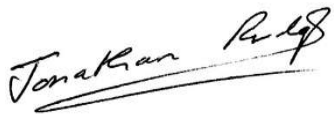
As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").
I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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



Jonathan H. Rudge MA FCA
3 Deerhurst Court
Solihull B91 3BY
21st April 2025

Modern Church Officers and Post-holders: 2024

President and Chair of Council: Professor Elaine Graham

Vice Chair of Council Anthony Woollard

General Secretary: Alison Webster

Secretary: Revd Canon Dr Jan van der Lely

Treasurer: Revd Diane Kutar

Administrator: Nic Tall

Communications Officer: Castor Bending

Vice Presidents:

Prof Paul Badham
The Revd Jonathan Clatworthy
Prof Elaine Graham
Rev Dr Nicholas Henderson
Dr Peter Mills
The Most Rev Barry Morgan
The Very Rev Prof Martyn Percy
The Rt Rev Dr John Saxbee
The Rt Rev Brian Smith
The Rt Revd Tim Stevens
The Revd Canon Dr Richard Truss
The Rt Revd Martin Wharton

Modern Church Council Members 2024

Revd Dr Jeyan Anketell[1]
Hugh Bryant
Revd Helen Burnett
Revd Dr Lorraine Cavanagh
Revd Dr Yin-An Chen
Very Revd Dr Jonathan Draper[1]
Professor Elaine Graham
Revd David Howard
Dr Anne-Marie Kramer[1]
Revd Diane Kutar[1] (Treasurer, elected annually)
Rosalind Lund
Revd Jidé Macaulay
Revd Naomi Nixon
Revd Stephen Parsons[1]
Joe Priestley
Revd Angela Sheard
Professor Adrian Thatcher
Revd Canon Dr Jan van der Lely[1]
Revd Don Witts
Anthony Woollard
Revd Sonya Wratten

[1] Term of office ends at the end of the 2025 AGM but can stand for re-election

In bold – current trustees

Also served on Council during 2024, but no longer on Council:

Revd Tom Keates
Revd Canon Trevor Pitt
Revd Canon Dr Alan Race
Ven Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes
Professor John Vickerman

MODERN CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 281573

Accounts

Modern Church
faith in the world

Annual Report of the Trustees for the year 2023

to be presented to the Annual General Meeting on

17th July 2024 at 2.00 pm

At the High Leigh Conference Centre

Office address:
2 The Orchard, Dowell Close, Taunton, TA2 6BN.

Website: www.modernchurch.org.uk

Email: office@modernchurch.org.uk

Registered charity no: 281573

ABOUT MODERN CHURCH

faith in the world

We understand that

- genuine faith is committed to the search for truth, wherever it comes from
- it is possible to think and talk about God in ways that make sense in our time and culture

We encourage

- open discussion: freedom to explore ideas, ask questions and change our minds without fear of disapproval
- critical scholarship: keeping up to date with good research, examining the implications of new insights and discoveries
- willingness to change: so that what we believe now can be expressed in the things our churches do and say.

We expect our theology to be

- public: talking the language of ordinary people, not that of a religious club
- relevant: engaging with what is going on in society, informing our faith and how we live
- respectful: willing to learn from others, within and outside Christianity, since we accept that we don't have all the answers.

Public benefit

As a charitable organisation we consider that our objects have the following public benefits:

- we have a duty within our present-day society to present Christianity in a way which can be understood by ordinary people
- we encourage all church people, both ordained and lay, to play a full part in the governance and activities of their churches and foster greater engagement with the mission of the churches to support the poor, sick and needy in society
- by engaging in research and study we can help our fellow Christians come to a deeper understanding of their faith and how it has developed our approach to theology will encourage people of all faiths to better understand one another thus promoting constructive relations between the faiths.

Report from the Chair of Trustees

In 2022, I outlined the recommendations made by our Council in March of that year concerning our principal priorities for Modern Church. These were:

- Broadening our membership base and engaging in new ways with supporters and subscribers
- Adopting a more co-ordinated approach to all our activities
- Nurturing members' spiritual and theological development
- Strengthening our link with other progressive Christian groups
- Raising our public profile

I am pleased to say that in 2023 we can see significant progress on all these fronts. Sections of this Annual Report will offer more detail on specific aspects of Modern Church, so my introduction will only briefly identify some of the highlights.

A major achievement this year has been the successful transition to in-house membership. This has enabled us to establish a more direct relationship with supporters, aided by a streamlined and updated subscription package.

We have also progressed towards a more integrated strategy of events and activities. While there is still a place for in-person meetings, our online events represent opportunities for outreach to new constituencies and different ways of working. In 2023, this included a fascinating interview with the US-based pastoral theologian and psychotherapist, Bruce Rogers-Vaughn. In November, we joined with SCM Press in organising an online panel to promote Luke Larner's edited collection on Church and Social Class, entitled Confounding the Mighty (2023).

Other enduring features of Modern Church's life have included the Public Square group, which continues to debate aspects of political significance, and our regular online Blog which, similarly, aims to keep abreast of current issues in church and society and is reflecting an increasingly diverse range of voices. We continue to be well-served by our print-based publications, Signs of the Times and Modern Believing, which maintain our reputation for high-quality, thoughtful and open theological debate.

As we move forward into 2024-25 we hope to offer members and supporters a range of activities and resources that reflect changing needs and interests. We are increasingly aware of a need for introductions to basic aspects of faith and spirituality, which we intend to pursue through activities such as short online courses and residential retreats. In 2024 we plan to relaunch our online Forum group as a space for members to pursue matters of shared concern informally.

During 2023, we began actively to consult external groups and organisations with a view to planning collaborative ventures. For example, we will be working with the Church Times in 2024 on some webinars, with a likely presence at their Festival of Faith and Literature in 2025. In July 2024, we hold our first day retreat, Queer and Green, jointly organised with Open Table and OneBodyOneFaith.

As we continue to raise our profile within our membership and beyond, I am grateful to

members of Council and Trustees for their advice and wisdom. Finally, my thanks go to our great team of staff and officers – Alison Webster, Nic Tall, Joe Priestley and Diane Kutar – for their skill, energy and commitment to everything that Modern Church represents.

Professor Elaine Graham FBA
Chair of Trustees

Modern Church General Secretary's Report 2023

1) A Year of Experiments

During 2023 we deliberately set ourselves the task of experimenting with new styles and formats for online events. We have explored lectures, panels, and 1-2-1 conversations with scholars and spiritual leaders. Stand-outs include the session on Caribbean Contextual Theology at the beginning of 2024 (focusing on Carlton Turner's new book of the same name, and with excellent contributions from Evie Vernon and Stephen Jennings as well as the author) – and our own Adrian Thatcher's launch of Vile Bodies (deemed, 'the best book launch ever' by one contributor in the chat). Other contributors to the latter included Helen King and Jarel Robinson Brown. Following on from our exploration of social class (via Luke Larner's 'Confounding the Mighty'), and a session on Anthony Reddie & Carol Troupe's 'Deconstructing Whiteness, Empire and Mission', we have been able to draw on and showcase a wide range of thinkers and activists.

2) A Year of Teamwork

The Executive Team (Chair, Treasurer, Administrator, Communications Officer and General Secretary) have held regular meetings and away-days throughout the period, giving detailed attention to the work, profile, and development strategy of the organisation. Taking our membership in-house from Liverpool University Press has been a major piece of work, and the restructuring of our membership that followed has provided an excellent foundation for future growth, which is already (at the time of writing) beginning to bear fruit. Each officer and staff member has played a significant part in the changeover.

3) A Year of Partnership-building

A key part of our development strategy is to work with other organisations where possible, to amplify and reinforce our reach and impact. An important partnership throughout 2023 and into 2024 has been with the national ecumenical Mission Theology and Apologetics Group (MTAG) to organise our 2024 Conference. The Chair of that group is to be Chair of our Conference (Prof John Drane), with the Executive staff member, Anne Richards, responsible alongside him for a significant part of the conference input. The conference theme ('Finding the Sacred in the 21st Century: New Ways of Looking at Spirituality) and design owes a huge amount to the experience, knowledge-based and expertise of Anne and John.

Other partnerships that have been worked upon throughout the year are those with the Church Times and Sarum College, along with our usual long-term partners (SCM, Inclusive Church, One Body One Faith, Open Table and Progressive Christianity Network). Looking ahead, 2024 will see a pilot day-retreat on Queer and Green issues (with OBOF and OT); and we will work with Inclusive Church to ensure our effective outreach to potential new members by sharing a stall at Greenbelt. As mentioned in the Chair's report, the partnership with the Church Times promises to bear fruit in online webinars and an event at the Winchester Festival of Faith and Literature.

4) A Year of Working Towards Integrating our Output

The Executive Team has worked hard on finding ways to ensure that our 'offer' to our members, and more widely, is effectively integrated. In 2024 we will look to bring the Forum back into this overarching strategy, enabling members to meet together regularly online building relationships and delving more deeply into issues of theological and spiritual importance. The aspiration is for in-person events to be of a more diverse nature (geographically, and in style), both picking up on and driving our published material (Modern Believing, SOTT and our blogs). Our published material, in turn, can resource Forum discussions, retreats, quiet days, and online panels and lectures.

In summary, 2023 has been a very successful year for Modern Church.

Alison Webster
General Secretary

Modern Believing Annual Report 2023

1. The Publisher

The quinquennial contract with our publisher, Liverpool University Press [LUP], expired at the end of 2023. It was renewed for a further 5 years, until Autumn 2028. In order to keep publication costs down, and in accordance with the charity's policy of making greater use of its website, the journal will cease to have a print edition, and move to online only, from the Spring of 2026 (67.1).

2. Access

There are three possible ways of reading the journal:
1. In print *and* online through the charity's website. Most subscribers read the journal through its print edition, even though the online edition is usually published 2 weeks earlier and is free for them to read there. Subscribers have direct access to the journal, and many back copies, there, by going to the Modern Church website, https://modernchurch.org.uk/modern-believing and clicking on 'Find the journal online'.
2. Online only through ATLA (American Theological Libraries Association) data base. The journal can be read by staff and students whose institutions subscribe to ATLA.
3. Online only through LUP, a leading journal publisher. Significant numbers of Universities

and Colleges hold a block subscription to LUP's journals, and *Modern Believing* attracts a growing readership from this source.

3. Content in 2023

64.1, 'Living in Love and Faith: Radical Perspectives', contained 6 presentations given to the 2022 Modern Church conference, the second to be held entirely online due to the covid crisis. Copies were lodged in Lambeth Palace Library. All C of E diocesan bishops were offered print copies, *gratis.* 11 accepted.
There were 649 requests to download this issue from the LUP data base, nearly 6 times as many as 64.2 (our 2nd most popular edition in 2023) which scored 109.
Tina Beardsley's article in 64.1, 'Trans People and LLF' was downloaded 578 times (nearly 15 times as many as our next most popular article, Sanjee Perera's 'Gauntlet at the Lychgate: How and Why is the Church of England Racist?' (39 downloads)).

64.2, 'He is Risen Indeed' was a timely attempt to introduce fresh thinking about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The edition included a contribution from the well-known Roman Catholic pioneering feminist theologian, Elizabeth Johnson.

64.3, 'Animals, Agriculture and Theology' introduced the Christian Ethics of Farmed Animal Welfare project, and contained an article by Carol J. Adams, an author considered notorious in 1990 for her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat.*

64.4, 'Women and Theological Modernism' was an enlarged, 154 page edition, describing and celebrating liberal theology – in the 125th anniversary year of Modern Church and Ripon Hall (the theological college which became associated with English modernism) – by exploring a neglected aspect of its history: *the contribution of women in the early years of the 20th century*. It is a treasure trove for researchers into early Feminist Theology. Its editorial, 8 articles and Jane Shaw's sermon will ensure it is sought out for years to come.

4. Ethnicity and Gender

No statistics are kept on ethnicity. However a continuing effort is made to identify non-Caucasian authors. Of the 24 authors in 2023, 9 were men, 15 were women.

5. Readership

5.1 Journal subscribers

Listed below are the numbers for MC members who are *subscribers*, i.e., recipients of the print edition. Figures are taken from the annual reports from LUP.

Member type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Concessionary members	69	72	82	78	72
Individual members	147	122	141	137	128
Joint members	7	8	8	7	6
Joint members (both concession)	8	7	7	6	6
Joint members (one concession)	1	1	1	1	1
Student members	12	5	5	7	5
Total members	252	223	244	236	218

In addition 45 institutions subscribe (2022), a decline from 71 in 2018. 32 are print + online: 13 online only. However, many institutions make the journal available to readers from their subscriptions to ATLA or LUP, so the figure of 45 may not represent a loss of readers.
This is the last year when membership statistics will be presented in this form. At the end of the year MC wrested back from LUP full control of membership administration, maintenance, and support. Early signs are that the new arrangements, including ease of supporting MC and subscribing to the journal through the MC website, are reversing the long slow decline in membership.

5.2 Readers on LUP website

There were 21,875 page views in 2023. Over 2,000 of these occurred *in a single day* in January, coincident with the publication of the *Living in Love and Faith* edition (see above for download figures). The next highest figure was 850 (on a day in November).
The top 10 Institutions downloading articles from MB, on the LUP website, were

	Institution	**Total Requests**
1	Modern Church	368
2	Nuffield College	39
3	Graduate Theological Union	27
4	University of St Andrews	25
5	University of Exeter	24
6	Queens Foundation	23
7	Boston College	22
8	Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen	21
9	Duke University	19
10	University of Birmingham	19

5.3 Readers on ATLA

ATLA has provided monthly totals for 'hits' on *Modern Believing* between Sept. 23 and Feb. 24, with comparisons for the same months in 2020 – 2022.

Month	Abstract or full text	2020	2021	2022	2023	% increase 2020-23
Sept 23	A	45	63	75	143	317%
	FT	75	106	150	222	296%
Oct	A	59	48	99	144	244%
	FT	89	92	146	211	237%
Nov	A	63	74	76	225	357%
	FT	76	114	122	271	356%
Dec	A	23	42	53	82	356%
	FT	56	74	101	163	291%
Jan 24	A	23	39	60	79	343%
	FT	59	63	94	190	322%
Feb	A	40	85	74	169	422%
	FT	66	119	109	270	409%
Mar	A	31	70	69	161	519%
	FT	86	107	125	319	370%

6. Reviews

Michael Brierley, distinguished Reviews Editor since 2009, edited book reviews for the last time in December (these reviews appeared in the Spring edition, 2024, 65.2). I paid a fitting tribute to his outstanding work on behalf of all our readers in this edition. He is followed by Victoria Turner whose thorough work already undertaken for the journal is already becoming evident in 2024.

7. Conclusions

1. The ATLA stats show that the online reach of the journal is growing rapidly. The charitable object of MC is 'the advancement of the Christian faith *for the benefit of the public…*'. The journal contributes increasingly to realizing the charitable object of its owner.

2. Outstanding authors and emerging scholars continue to write for us. The editorial policy of setting themes for each edition and inviting authors to contribute to them continues to work well.

3. A transformation of the charity's administration has taken place in 2023, making it easier for potential readers to subscribe, and for the charity to maintain contact with them. It is hoped that these new arrangements will increase the number of online and print readers in 2024.

Adrian Thatcher
Editor

Modern Church Membership Report

In 2023 Modern Church made major changes to its membership structure, taking direct management of its membership in house from LUP, who had managed membership for ten years.

The new model allowed people to sign up directly through the Moden Church website, and gave Modern Church notice of new members instantly allowing a quick response in welcoming them. Members who had historically been on an annual direct debit payment were retained on that basis, while all new members signed up on a monthly direct debit including the option to make an extra donation each month to further support the work of the charity. The previous distinction between full members, who received the journal, and affiliate members who did not was ended. Under the new scheme any person who made a financial contribution to supporting Modern Church was classed as a member with the full benefits arising from that, with some members opting to pay extra to receive the journal.

The changeover to the new system happened in late 2023 to coincide with the scheduled annual direct debit payments inherited from LUP. Around one third of members were not

on the direct debit system, so much work happened through early 2024 to encourage resubscriptions. As a result the membership figures from 31st December 2023 are artificially lower than the real position. There are still some affiliate memberships in place as they operate on a 12 month subscription basis, but on their completion those on the old affiliate membership scheme are invited to transfer onto the new monthly direct debit system. This has led to some former affiliates subscribing to the journal.

Membership numbers over the last few years, measured at the end of the year, were as follows:

Subscription Type	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Members	336	321	316	251	215	208	213	187
Life Members	10	9	9	8	8	8	7	7
Affiliate Members	0	0	0	0	0	45	33	15
Total Memberships	346	330	325	259	223	261	253	209

Since taking membership in house at the end of 2023 Modern Church has seen a steady increase in people joining, showing the new method of signing up was working as planned. On a month by month basis so far in 2024 membership numbers have changed as follows:

Subscription Type	**Jan 24**	**Feb 24**	**Mar 24**	**Apr 24**	**May 24**	**Jun 24**
Members	187	196	203	214	222	225
Life Members	7	7	7	7	7	7
Affiliate Members	15	15	15	15	8	8
Total Memberships	209	218	225	236	237	240

The topline number of subscribing members is now at its highest level since 2019, the vast majority of members are now on automatic direct debit payments meaning that membership retention should remain high. While the new system is at a very early stage it has been satisfying to see new members signing up and we look forward to seeing if the upward trend continues over the months and years ahead.

Nic Tall
Administrator

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

I am delighted to report that my appeal for contributions to our quarterly newsletter, included in last year's Annual Report, has borne much fruit! The past year has had its fair share of significant events in both Church and world, and in Modern Church itself, on which our readers have offered thoughtful comments. Associated bodies like the Public Square Group are a particularly valuable support of such material. Besides all this, ongoing theological discussion points have been dealt with, in ways usually serious but sometimes more humorous, and some completely new contributors have shown that they have much to offer.

Along with our website, our blog, and an increasing diversity of online events, *Signs* has more than ever become our principal "shop window". As well as being distributed to members, it can be made available to enquirers as well as those attending other events in which we are involved. If anyone would like extra copies to distribute to enquirers in their own church or neighbourhood, or at events which they attend, they should request these from our administrator (office@modernchurch.org.uk).

Articles by members (and indeed others) about contemporary issues likely to be of interest to our readership, are always welcome, though it may not always be possible to find space for them at once. More responses to those articles would also be of great value. The management of book reviews - of which we have also had some notable examples in the year - has now passed from Trevor Pitt to Terry Drummond, who is always looking for books to review and people to review them, and your suggestions to terry.drummond@hotmail.com will be appreciated.

Thanks are due to them both, and to the other members of the editorial team – our General Secretary, our Communications Officer, and Rosalind Lund, Lorraine Cavanagh and Helen Burnett – and to our designer Richard Remington; but above all to our contributors.

Anthony Woollard
SoTT Editor

Treasurer's Report

The outcome for 2023 in the face of it looks better than 2022. However, it should be noted that the receipts for 2023 have been inflated by the change in how membership is processed, and we are yet to pay LUP with respect to costs associated with the publication of Modern Believing. We have benefited from the improvement in the performance of the CCLA shares after taking a significant hit last year. This sees the value having recovered by £22k over and above the value of shares sold in the year, improving the balance sheet despite the deficit in the income and receipts statement.

Legacy
We began the year with £66k of the original amount which was set aside for special projects. During the course of the year, we spent circa £25.6k of our planned spending over a five-year period on designated legacy projects including spending on SOTT, and the salary of our General Secretary. This is in line with expectations. This leaves just over £40k of the legacy for continuing projects which have started or for new ones. Trustees and the new General Secretary continue to review the legacy and reserves policies to ensure that we can continue to work with other organizations and fellow travellers to bring the insights of Modern Church to a wider audience, as well as protecting the continued existence of Modern Church.

Signs of the Times
This continues to be sent to all members. It is currently costing around £6,000 pa. We have produced additional copies on occasions for distribution at events and these have proved a useful marketing tool.

Modern Believing
Adrian Thatcher, a Trustee, is paid an annual honorarium of £2,500 as Editor as previously agreed by Trustees. The cost of printing and posting out of MB has remained consistent with 2022.

Subscriptions and Membership
Subscription income appears to have risen substantially in 2023 but this is due to the change in processing of membership with the move in house. There remain costs to be met at LUP which will not be quantified until 2024. The early indications are the change in membership and fee structures is having a positive effect on income and the levels of membership.

Conference
We have continued to experience significant losses relating to the Annual Conference. This amounted to circa £10k this year. This is primarily due to having to commit to a volume of places that we failed to fill. The officers of Modern Church and the Trustees are holding discussions to consider future plans as clearly this level of losses is not sustainable.

Policies

Legacy Policy
MC has been very fortunate to receive a number of fairly substantial legacies from former members over the years for which Trustees are very grateful. We wish to encourage members to continue to remember the Society in their wills in this way to help ensure that the work continues for future generations of church people.

Reserves Policy
In light of the receipt of substantial legacy funds in 2017 and the decision to pay a salary to our General Secretary, it was agreed to modify our Reserves Policy for the time being. Thus, legacies received during 2017 have been considered as a project fund to pay for the General Secretary's salary and expenses. It was agreed at this time that the reserves held by MC prior to 2017 and which provided an annual income towards the day-to-day running expenses of MC of over £8,500 should continue to be held as designated reserves.

Data Protection Policy
Modern Church adheres to Government guidance on data protection. We pay an annual registration fee to the Information Commissioner. Our membership records and subscription management has been moved in-house. Liverpool University Press continue to publish and distribute *Modern Believing* on our behalf.

Independent Examiner
I am grateful to Jonathan Rudge once again for agreeing to act as our Independent Examiner and his report is attached.

Diane Kutar
Treasurer

Receipts & Payments Accounts to 31 December 2023

		2023	2023	2022	2022
Receipts					
Subscriptions	Subscriptions LUP	15037		8165	
	Subscriptions Affiliate	307		785	
	Gift Aid	567		446	
			15885		9396
Investment Income		13239		14057	
			13239		14057
Conferences	Annual Conferences	8328		9598	
	Council Residential	1437		164	
	Other Conferences	0		215	
			9764		9977
Miscellaneous	Donations (Note 4)	20		1164	
	Publications (MB Royalties)(Notes 2 & 3)	313		1034	
	Other	404		0	
			737		2198
	Total Receipts		**39624**		**35627**
Payments					
Legacy Project (Note 5)	General Secretary	18620		16746	
	Projects	0		6948	
	General Secretary Expenses	404		1057	
			19024		24750
Publications	Modern Believing	4167		3913	
	SOTT (Legacy Project) (Note 6)	6296		5974	
	Editors	2500		2500	
	Other Publications	0		0	
	Legacy Relaunch	0		0	
			12963		12388
Communications	Communications Officer	7308		6481	
	Advertising	0		2503	
	Website costs	467		552	
			7753		9535
Admin	Administrator	7358		8043	
	Accounting Fees	570		441	
	Trustees Room hire	539		248	
	Admin expenses	3112		1739	
	Miscellaneous	185		262	
			11764		10733
Conferences	Annual Conference (Note 1)	16945		19295	
	Council Residential	4344		1098	
	Other	982		0	
			22271		20393
	Total Payments		**73775**		**77799**
Surplus/deficit			**-34150**		**-42173**

Bank and Investment Balances at 31 December 2023			**2023**	**2023**	**2022**	**2022**
FUNDS STATEMENT - Members' Funds						
Opening Balances						
Undesignated			142476		217573	
Designated		Reserves	263429		263429	
	(Note 5)	Legacy Projects	66006		96730	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	821	472732	746	578478
Surplus/deficit Cash Flow			-34150		-42173	
Unrealised holdings gains/losses	(Note 7)		41261	7111	-63573	-105746
Closing Funds				**479843**		**472732**
Represented by						
Undesignated			171664		142476	
Designated		Reserves	263429		263429	
	(Note 5)	Legacy Projects	43929		66006	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	821		821	
Total Funds						**472732**
Members' Assets						
CAF Bank			12457		25861	
Paypal			263		1053	
CCLA Deposit			1391	14111	1348	28262
CCLA Shares - revaluation 29/12/2023	(Note 7)		465731	**479843**	444470	**472732**
Total				**479843**		**472732**

1. Expenses: This figure includes the deposit paid for the 2024 conference - please see the separate section on treasurer's report on the 2023 conference financial outcome.
2. This figure has been reduced by the payment towards to joint publication of the Race/Clatworthy book on Christology for which there have been no receipts yet.
3. Modern Church receives payments from LUP in relation to subscriptions from libraries and institutions, referred to as royalties.
4. Donations: No donations have been received this year.
5. Legacy Projects - legacy expenditure in 2023 relates to the work and remuneration of the General Secretary and SOTT (see Note 6). Of the funds allocated to legacy projects just over £40k remains.
6. Signs of the Times (SOTT) continues to show high costs since a re-design in 2019 and is considered as part of our Legacy Project.
7. There has been a significant upturn in the share price of our CCLA investments, sufficient to offset the sale of shares.

Independent Examiner's Report
to the Trustees of Modern Church
For the year ended 31st December 2023
Registered Charity no. 281573

Independent examiner's statement

I report on the accounts of the Modern Church ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 December 2023, which are set out on the attached pages and show a cash deficit of £34.150, together with funds totalling £479,843 at the year end.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you 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 Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Jonathan H. Rudge MA FCA
20 Blackthorne Close
Solihull B91 1PF
13th June 2024

Modern Church Officers and Post-holders: 2023

President and Chair of Council: Professor Elaine Graham

Vice Chair of Council Anthony Woollard

General Secretary: Alison Webster

Secretary: Revd Canon Dr Jan van der Lely

Treasurer: Revd Diane Kutar

Administrator: Nic Tall

Communications Officer: Joe Priestley

Vice Presidents:

Prof Paul Badham
The Revd Jonathan Clatworthy
Prof Elaine Graham
Rev Dr Nicholas Henderson
Dr Peter Mills
The Most Rev Barry Morgan
The Very Rev Prof Martyn Percy
The Rt Rev Dr John Saxbee
The Rt Rev Brian Smith
The Rt Revd Tim Stevens
The Revd Canon Dr Richard Truss
The Rt Revd Martin Wharton

Modern Church Council Members 2023

Revd Dr Jeyan Anketell
Hugh Bryant
Revd Helen Burnett[1]
Revd Dr Lorraine Cavanagh[1]
Revd Dr Yin-An Chen
Very Revd Dr Jonathan Draper
Professor Elaine Graham
Revd David Howard
Revd Tom Keates
Dr Anne-Marie Kramer
Revd Diane Kutar[1] (Treasurer, elected annually)
Rosalind Lund
Revd Stephen Parsons
Revd Canon Trevor Pitt[1]
Revd Canon Dr Alan Race[1]
Revd Angela Sheard
Professor Adrian Thatcher[1]
Ven Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes[1]
Revd Canon Dr Jan van der Lely
Professor John Vickerman
Anthony Woollard[1]
Revd Sonya Wratten

[1] Term of office ends at the end of the 2023 AGM but can stand for re-election

In bold – current trustees

Also served on Council during 2023, but no longer on Council:

Jean Barnett
Revd Canon David Driscoll
Revd David James

MODERN CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 281573

Accounts

Modern Church
faith in the world

Annual Report of the Trustees for the year 2022

to be presented to the Annual General Meeting on

18th July 2022 at 4pm at High Leigh Conference Centre

Office address:
2 The Orchard, Dowell Close, Taunton TA2 6BN

Website: www.modernchurch.org.uk
Email: office@modernchurch.org.uk
Registered charity no: 281573

ABOUT MODERN CHURCH

Faith in the World

We understand that

• genuine faith is committed to the search for truth, wherever it comes from

• it is possible to think and talk about God in ways that make sense in our time and culture

We encourage

• open discussion: freedom to explore ideas, ask questions and change our minds without fear of disapproval

• critical scholarship: keeping up to date with good research, examining the

implications of new insights and discoveries

• willingness to change: so that what we believe now can be expressed in the things our churches do and say.

We expect our theology to be

• public: talking the language of ordinary people, not that of a religious club

• relevant: engaging with what is going on in society, informing our faith and how we live

• respectful: willing to learn from others, within and outside Christianity, since we accept that we don't have all the answers.

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As a charitable organisation we consider that our objects have the following public benefits:

• we have a duty within our present-day society to present Christianity in a way which can be understood by ordinary people

• we encourage all church people, both ordained and lay, to play a full part in the governance and activities of their churches and foster greater engagement with the mission of the churches to support the poor, sick and needy in society

• by engaging in research and study we can help our fellow Christians come to a deeper understanding of their faith and how it has developed

• our approach to theology will encourage people of all faiths to better understand one another thus promoting constructive relations between the faiths.

Report from the Chair of Trustees

In his last report to the Modern Church AGM last year, our outgoing Chair of Trustees, Alan Race indicated that a number of issues to do with our core activities and structures would need to be reviewed over the next few years. These included our membership model, patterns of engagement and participation in our core activities, relations with other groups, our publications and web and social media presence. This year has seen the beginnings of that process, at least in terms of the early stages of planning and consultation.

Some of this review process has been prompted by a change of personnel, and we have welcomed Alison Webster as our new General Secretary and Nic Tall as administrator, both of whom bring immense expertise and valuable networking skills. Joe Priestley continues to provide superb support as Communications Officer, especially through our website (and ever-growing blog) and social media, in what is becoming an ever more pivotal role.

Along with those changes, however, we had already become aware of other factors. We realized that, like many organizations, our re-emergence post-COVID would inevitably bring changes to the way we operated. We have experienced the benefits of a move from in-person to online events (in terms of accessibility, cost, carbon footprint) while learning again to appreciate the value of face-to-face meetings. It is likely that this 'hybrid' or mixed mode across different offerings (and the associated blend of electronic and paper communication) will eventually be our 'new normal'.

In September 2022, the Trustees agreed to establish a review of MC's vision for the future and charged the Executive group of Alison, Nic, Joe, Diane Kutar (our new Treasurer) and myself with identifying key priorities. These include understanding the changing context in Church and society, reviewing how prospective members and supporters engage with MC, how we communicate, and how we make best use of the resources – human, financial, intellectual – available to us.

At its March meeting, Council discussed these in some detail, suggesting a number of key recommendations:

1. **Exploring diverse models of membership and involvement across our various offerings.** Management of membership will begin its migration from Liverpool University Press this autumn,

enabling us to be more flexible and responsive to those wishing to participate in Modern Church activities.

2. **Adopting a more co-ordinated approach to our programme of events and publications**, with a commitment to both online and in-person events. Regular online lectures, together with in-person meetings, will continue to supplement our annual summer conference and enable us to explore and respond to more current issues of concern.

3. **Focusing on members' theological and spiritual journeys**, with a renewed emphasis on providing resources to support people at all stages of faith. This might include educational and study resources, introductions to Christian basics, as well as retreats and study days.

4. **Strengthening our links with other progressive Christian organizations**, especially around key campaigns.

5. **Promoting our public profile** as a home for reasoned, accessible theological reflection on matters of global significance.

While we will primarily be concerned with practical and operational aspects in this review process, our core values have never been far from our minds, as we have deliberated over how to keep faith with MC's historic aims and objects in a changing context. A commitment to free enquiry, openness to the insights of science and culture as well as being grounded in the wisdom of Christian tradition, an inclusive and broad-based approach to all our activities, continue to be central. But as we move forward, we will be asking how to fulfil and maintain these principles in ways that are fully sustainable: financially, environmentally and organizationally.

There is much to celebrate about our vision for the Church and the world and I look forward to working with members, Council, Trustees and staff in our next steps to realize it.

Professor Elaine Graham FBA, Chair of Trustees

Report from the General Secretary

My first priority on taking up post in September 2022 was ‘familiarisation and orientation’ – with the organisation, our personnel, and our partners. I therefore prioritised one-to-one meetings to explore the inner workings of Modern Believing, the Forum, Trustees – and partners such as Student Christian Movement, Progressive Christianity Network, Society for the Study of Theology, and Inclusive Church. I also spoke with new Trustees and Council members, and older ones too! Attending the Forum and the Public Square Group were also important experiences.

It was decided early on that an important challenge as we think about a future strategy for Modern Church is communication between staff and officers. It has therefore been a pleasure to establish regular meetings between myself and Joe Priestley (communications) and Nic Tall (administrator), and to get to know one another. In addition Elaine Graham (MC Chair) and I have facilitated two away-days in London for the ‘Executive Team’ (i.e. the two of us, Nic, Joe and Diane Kutar, Treasurer) to think through the strategic direction of Modern Church in order to facilitate the thinking of Trustees’ and Council, and also to begin to sketch out and then oversee a coherent framework for work themes and content in the future. Two additional meetings have also taken place online. This is an emergent team that is a pleasure to be part of, and brings together considerable and complementary skills, experiences and knowledge of the organisation.

There has been a considerable amount of ‘picking up threads’ over the first few months, including:

- **The Modern Church Blog** – Joe and I both thought it necessary to commission frequent contributions from a wider range of writers – both established and new, and we have had considerable success in this. A new writer, Amy Rhodes reflected on contemplative prayer from a neuro-divergent perspective; Naomi Lawson Jacobs on ‘Disability and God’s. Elaine Graham and I picked up two Public Square Group themes (the role of Royal Commissions in public policy-making, and participatory democracy respectively). Bishop David Walker added to this with his focus on housing policy, and Joanna Collicutt made an important intervention on the future of social care. Several blogs have focused on our conference theme for 2023: Anthony Reddie on racial diversity in the Tory cabinet, and what it really signals; Andrea Sheard on navigating racial discourse in the Church of England as a mixed-race person; Hasna Khatun on decolonising theological training and education, and Al Barrett and myself on critically rethinking Whiteness. Lorraine Cavanagh has continued to make a valued contribution, reflecting on bullying in

church contexts, and my own contributions have also covered 'The Queue' that formed to view the Queen's lying in state, and the performance of Matt Hancock on 'I'm a Celebrity'. A case of 'the sublime to the ridiculous' if ever there was one. We have explored the currency and meaning of the term 'Liberal Theology' with Beth Keith and Eddie Green, and Inderjit Bhogal has responded to the 'hostile environment' for those seeking asylum through his blog on the Sanctuary movement and the church's place in it. Jonathan Clatworthy reflected on various economic themes, and reflected on Ian McGilchrist's thinking about the brain, and Rosalind Lund responded to the news that Christianity is now a 'minority religion' in the UK. A key change is that our editorial policy is now to be more proactive in commissioning blogs, and also to ensure that the Chair of Modern Church approves them before publication.

- **Modern Believing** – discussions with Taylor and Francis took place to explore whether we should change our publishers, but we have taken the decision to stay with Liverpool University Press as a not-for-profit enterprise. We have improved our communications with them, and are planning regular meetings in the future, not least to devise a marketing strategy once we have brought our membership in-house.

- **MC Conferences 2023 and 2024** – it has been a pleasure to be part of the planning for these two conferences. Both explore key themes which have produced and will produce much fertile theologising during 2023 and 2024.

- **MC's various interventions around Living in Love and Faith**, which have been impressively strategic and multi-faceted. We published the edition of Modern Believing that focuses on LLF, and sent free copies to those bishops that requested it (11), having let all the bishops know in advance that it is coming out (and advised them on how to access the lectures online).
  We Published a blog by Bishop Jonathan Clark (designed to come out soon after the publication of the Bishops' papers for General Synod, but brought forward because of the leak to the press of the outcome of their deliberations).

  We set up a lecture by Prof Helen King for 26th January (a contributor to our 2022 conference, and member of all the key General Synod bodies engaging with LLF and the future), and publicised it through social media and the Jonathan Clark blog. This provided a timely opportunity for 'progressives' to be fully briefed on the most effective and strategic ways forward for LGBTIQ+ Christians and their allies – whether on General Synod, or 'in the pew'.

The effectiveness of these interventions was much aided by Nic Tall's closeness to the action, and Joe Priestley's customary skill with social media, and provides a good model for the future in how we plan a 'multi-pincer approach' to key ecclesiastical and theological developments.

Online Lectures: The lecture by Iain McGilchrist was already set up for 2022, and was immensely successful. This has led us to adopt a policy of having such events regularly.

Strategic Development of the Organisation: this has developed hugely, and has been a team effort: executive team, Trustees and Council, leading us into 2023 and beyond.

Alison Webster, General Secretary

Modern Believing Annual Report 2022

1. The Publisher
The quinquennial contract with our publisher, Liverpool University Press [LUP], expires at the end of 2023. The Editorial Team investigated the possibility of moving to an alternative publisher. It agreed that the adoption of a new draft contract with LUP was in the best interest of the journal, and represented best value for money. The proposal to continue with LUP for the quinquennium 2024-8 was unanimously adopted by the Trustees. The journal will continue to be available both in print and online.

2. Content in 2022
63.1, 'Theology and the Climate Emergency', presented 4 talks given at the 2021 Modern Church conference, held online due to the covid crisis. Michael Brierley, Reviews Editor, edited the entire edition, 63.2, 'God's Relation to the World: Discovering Panentheism'. Interest in Christian spirituality led to the topic of 'Prayer', 63.3. The edition included several meditative poems and was edited by a Trustee, Miranda Threlfall-Holmes. 64.4, 'The Holy Spirit', framed a discussion of the Spirit within ecotheology and religious pluralism. Many of the authors were very well known. Some were emerging theologians. I continue to be surprised and pleased by the flow of kind and positive responses to my requests for specific contributions to the various themes of the different editions. Contributors

receive no remuneration for their work, so the journal relies entirely on their good will.

3. Ethnicity and Gender
No statistics ae kept on ethnicity. However a continuing effort is made to identify non-Caucasian authors.

Two editions achieved gender parity, m/f 2:2. 1 almost achieved it, 2:3; 1 specialist and multi-authored edition had a m/f ratio of 7/2. [In January 2023 the m/f ratio was 2:4, so overall parity is within sight.]

4. Readership
4.1 Journal subscribers. Listed below are the numbers for *subscribers*, i.e., recipients of the print edition. Figures are taken from the annual report from LUP.

Member type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Concessionary members	88	69	72	82	78
Individual members	188	147	122	141	137
Joint members	9	7	8	8	7
Joint members (both concession)	10	8	7	7	6
Joint members (one concession)	2	1	1	1	1
Student members	20	12	5	5	7
Total members	326	252	223	244	236

In addition 47 institutions subscribe (2022), a decline from 71 in 2018. However, institutions may make the journal available to readers from their subscriptions to ATLA, so the figure of 47 may not represent a loss of readers.

4.2 ATLA users. ATLA (American Theological Libraries Association) reports the ‘hits’ for the year September 2021 – August 2022 as follows:

Month	**MC Hits**	**MB Hits**	**Total Hits**
Sep-21	449	1636	2085
Oct-21	722	2224	2946
Nov-21	638	1956	2594
Dec-21	573	1482	2055
Jan-22	339	1411	1750
Feb-22	535	1814	2349

Mar-22	540	2158	2698
Apr-22	607	2091	2698
May-22	409	1290	1699
Jun-22	296	978	1274
Jul-22	269	1075	1344
Aug-22	199	550	749
FY22 Total	**5576**	**18665**	**24241**

4.3 LUP website

LUP has a new Atypon website. Students and staff of institutions subscribing to LUP have access to Modern Believing. The top 5 Institutions downloading MB content from LUP were

1. University of Leeds
2. Southern Methodist University
3. University of Glasgow
4. University of St Andrews
5. Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford

5. Reviews

The Reviews Editor, Michael Brierley, has edited 140 reviews spread over the 4 issues in 2022, always matching an appropriate reviewer to a particular book. Since each edition became thematic, Michael has arranged the production of reviews so that the bulk of them support the edition's theme. This is a welcome innovation, begun in 2021 and continued in 2022, adding breadth and depth to the issue's topic. As usual his work has been invaluable. Emerging theologians have been identified and encouraged to write for the journal. Over half the reviewers in 2022 were reviewing in the journal for the first time.

6. Current Tasks in 2023

Reviews Editor

Michael Brierley is standing down at the end of 2023, by which time he will have edited reviews for 60 issues, and edited over a million words in over 1,500 reviews. He will be sorely missed. The appointment of a reviews editor is under urgent consideration.

Editorial Board and Team

The Board provides academic and general advice to the Editor. The Team is responsible to the Trustees for the day to day running of the journal. Since all Team meetings are conducted online, it will be easier to incorporate members external to the organization. This will be done in 2023.

The New Quinquennium

The current editorial policy will be continued, viz.,

i) to cease to rely on uncommissioned, peer-reviewed articles for the non-conference editions;

ii) to invite articles from established scholars in accordance with themes for each edition, decided by the Editor; and

iii) to provide a sharper focus for the journal, based on the need a) to update our readers with developments in the different branches of Theology, and b) to provide a progressive alternative to 'theology-lite' conservative assumptions and positions.

However, *the themes from April 2025 on are undecided*. The Editor is consulting widely with Board and Team members regarding themes and suitable authors (well established and emerging), paying regard to gender and ethnicity, topical and emerging theological themes, and the broad interests of the journal's readers.

Growing the Readership

As membership management becomes in-house, knowledge and control of the membership becomes easier. Follow-up of lapsed members, direct contact with authors, reviewers, affiliates, and potential subscribers, offering membership packages becomes possible.

A majority of new members may be expected to opt for reading the journal online through the LUP website. Trustees may need to take online only readership into account when reviewing their subscription policy.

Membership Report

2022 was the ninth full year for which the subscriptions to Modern Church were managed by Liverpool University Press (LUP) and operating on a calendar year subscription. Longer term Modern Church is looking to take the management of its membership back in house which will allow closer contact with members and a more integrated member experience alongside the rest of the organisations activities. The Affiliate membership scheme has continued, although retention of affiliates once the annual subscription is up for renewal has been low.

Subscription Type	2020	2021	2022
Individual Membership	199	194	200
Joint Memberships	16	14	13
Life Membership	8	8	7
Total Memberships	223	216	220

Affiliates		45	33
TOTAL Memberships & Affiliates	**223**	**261**	**253**

Nic Tall, Modern Church Administrator

Signs of the Times

2022 was a “transition” year in many ways for most of us. We emerged blinking into the sunlight of a world recovering from the worst of Covid restrictions – to be plunged into a re-emergence of open warfare at the heart of Europe. We celebrated the Queen’s Jubilee – and then her funeral. Our national political scene did not “transition” so much as veered, some would say, from one tragic farce to another. Our Church, rather similarly, wrestled with its perennial problems, not least through *Living in Love and Faith.* But the year was definitely transitional for Modern Church, with a new Chair, a new General Secretary, and the beginnings of a return to face-to-face meetings.

Much of all this was reflected in *Signs of the Times.* And our quarterly newsletter may be undergoing a transition of its own.

It has not always been easy to attract contributors. There have been editions over the past few years which have been written largely by the Editor (a very bad habit – but space must be filled!) or consisted predominantly of book reviews. Perhaps this has been due to the growing importance of the Modern Church social-media presence and blog which offer opportunities for much more flexible and timely interventions into our debates. However, the past year or so has seen offers of contributions to *Signs* increasing notably in both numbers and quality.

There are a number of reasons for this. The transition within Modern Church, to which I have referred, has, I believe, re-energised many of our members. The setting up of the Public Square Group, under Richard Truss who saw his own niece (very briefly!) at the centre of our national political life, may indirectly be linked with this new surge of energy, and seems likely to be a continued source of copy for *Signs.* On a much sadder note

of “transition”, we are seeing many of our elder members passing from our midst, and the obituary of Jean Mayland was one of the major items which we featured in 2022. But, quite simply, across the board there is more to write about, worthy to be included in a printed publication of record which I believe remains of value to a movement like ours even in these online-dominated times. Our truly memorable (though itself, alas, still online-only) 2022 Annual Conference, related to the themes of *Living in Love and Faith,* was a good example of that, and the McGilchrist lecture on right-brain and left-brain thinking was another event which gave rise to much response.

Along with our website, then, *Signs* has become in an even more real sense our principal “shop window”. As well as being distributed to members and affiliates, it can be made available to enquirers as well as those attending other events in which we are involved. If any members would like extra copies to distribute to enquirers in their own church or neighbourhood, or at events which they attend, they should request these from our administrator (office@modernchurch.org.uk).

Articles by members (and indeed others) about contemporary issues likely to be of interest to our readership, are always welcome, though it may not always be possible to find space for them at once. More responses to those articles would also be of great value. The management of book reviews remains in the capable hands of Trevor Pitt, who is always looking for books to review and people to review them, and your suggestions will be appreciated.

Thanks are due to him, and to the other members of the editorial team – our General Secretary, our Communications Officer, and Lorraine Cavanagh and Helen Burnett – and to our designer Richard Remington; but above all to our contributors.

Anthony Woollard, Editor – Signs of the Times

Report from the Communication Officer

2022 saw a return to a diverse range of contributors to Modern Church’s channels. Articles from James Woodward, Anthony Reddie and Alison Webster swelled the ranks of our regular contributors to ensure that we were fulfilling the objectives of Modern Church, primarily through our blog (www.modernchurch.org.uk/blog) and Twitter (https://twitter.com/ModernChurchUK).

In 2022 the website:

- Received 53,860 views
- Was viewed by 23,859 unique viewers

- Published 75 new posts

The vast majority of viewers live in the UK (43,660) with a significant number in the US (4,293) and Australia (1,120). Alongside the blog, the website also functions to advertise Modern Church's events. Details of our 2022 conference were viewed 1,671 times. Iain McGilchrist's online lecture also received over 1,108 views.

All of this reflects a diversification of the Communication Officer's role to encompass a whole host of digital adventures previously unthinkable before the Covid-19 pandemic. Significant time is now spent utilising digital skills to underpin a programme of online lectures, live streamed from Zoom to YouTube, and in ensuring the Modern Church conference has a significant online element. In 2022, thanks to the Climate Crisis, the whole programme was shifted online at short notice and delivered over Zoom. This required significant time investment, but did see the production of some excellent video resources on our website which will be a lasting legacy of the conference, complementing *Modern Believing's* conference edition.

This goes some way to explaining a decline from the heady heights of 2021, which saw record viewership of our website. By comparison to 2022's figures, 2021 saw nearly 70,000 views on Modern Church's website, primarily to read Martyn Percy's contributions, which drove up to 7,346 views *per article.* However, the arrival of a new General Secretary has seen a move towards seeking out new authors and contributors to the blog. None as yet have proven quite as magnetic as Martyn's but the diversity of our bloggers, as well as the subject matter of commissioned articles, has allowed Modern Church to actively participate in a number of emerging conversation points or debates.

This brings me to our most prolific channel: Twitter. 2022 saw considerable growth in our following which, when coupled with commissioned blogs on a fast turnaround, led to up to 65,000 Twitter impressions a month (an impression is when a Tweet appears on a user's timeline). Our Twitter following grew by around 250 through 2022. Armed with new blogs from big names, Modern Church was able to contribute to a range of debates raging online, providing a well-researched, thorough piece of authorship on a platform otherwise known for 140 characters of vitriol.

Joe Priestley, Communications Officer

Treasurer's Report

At last we were able to recommence face to face meetings with Council in March. Unfortunately our Annual Conference once more had to revert to online unexpectedly, hit by the double travails of rail strikes and heatwave. The last minute change in plans with respect to conference resulted in a significant loss but the economic uncertainty nationally in the latter half of 2022 proved more damaging to our financial position with a large revaluation of our share account held with CCLA. A painful reminder that our investments can fall as well as increase in value.

Legacy
We began the year with just under £96k of the original amount which was set aside for special projects. During the course of the year we spent approximately £30,000 of our planned spending over a five year period on designated legacy projects including spending on SOTT, a Church Times insert, a sponsor ship project with the Church Times and the salary of our General Secretary. This leaves just over £66k of the legacy for continuing projects which have started or for new ones. Trustees and the new General Secretary continue to review the legacy and reserves policies to ensure that we can continue to work with other organizations and fellow travellers to bring the insights of Modern Church to a wider audience, as well as protecting the continued existence of the Society.

Signs of the Times
This continues to be sent to all members and affiliate members in its new design format. It is currently costing just under £6,000 pa as we identified a cheaper print supplier towards the end of the year so this may reduce further over 2023.

Modern Believing
Adrian Thatcher, a Trustee, is paid an annual honorarium of £2,500 as Editor as previously agreed by Trustees. The cost of printing and posting out of MB has gone down by approximately £1,000 – due to a continued reduction in membership numbers. Royalty income from sales to libraries is down slightly.

Subscriptions and Membership
Income from membership subscriptions is down again this year. Affiliate members are listed separately to enable comparisons to be drawn in future years, and this has risen slightly on last year, and work has been undertaken to ensure renewals are chased.

Conference
High Leigh conference centre inevitably had to charge for the extremely late cancellation of conference in 2022. This should have accrued a final invoice of just under £15k. However, they reduced this to £10.6k which was much appreciated.

Policies

Legacy Policy
MC has been very fortunate to receive a number of fairly substantial legacies from former members over the years for which Trustees are very grateful. We wish to encourage members to continue to remember the Society in their wills in this way to help ensure that the work continues for future generations of church people. In 2017 we received two significant legacies from former members of MC - £231,000 from Paddy Lewin and £5,000 from Joan Dorrell. In 2022 we received a further £1,028 from the estate of Paddy Lewin.

Reserves Policy
In light of the receipt of substantial legacy funds in 2017 and the decision to pay a salary to our General Secretary, it was agreed to modify our Reserves Policy for the time being. Thus the legacies received during 2017 have been considered as a project fund to pay for the General Secretary's salary and expenses and to provide the necessary support for him to develop the work of MC over the five years of his contract. It was agreed at this time that the reserves held by MC prior to 2017 and which provided an annual income towards the day-to-day running expenses of MC of over £8,500 should continue to be held as designated reserves.

Data Protection Policy
Modern Church adheres to Government guidance on data protection. We pay an annual registration fee to the Information Commissioner. Our membership records are managed by Liverpool University Press who publish and distribute Modern Believing on our behalf. Affiliate member records are managed in-house.

Independent Examiner
I am grateful to Jonathan Rudge once again for agreeing to act as our Independent Examiner and his report is attached.

Diane Kutar, Treasurer

Modern Church
Receipts & Payments Accounts to 31 Dec 2022

		2022	2022	2021	2021
Receipts					
Subscriptions	Subscriptions LUP	8165		9071	
	Subscriptions Affiliate	785		695	
	Gift Aid	446			
			9396		9766
Investment Income		14057		14688	
			14057		14688
Conferences	Annual Conferences (Note 2)	9598		1410	
	Council Residential	164		0	
	Other Conferences	215			
			9977		1410
Miscellaneous	Donations (Note 4)	1164		295	
	Publications (MB Royalties) (Note 3)	1034		1153	
	Other	0		70	
			2198		1519
	Total Receipts		**35627**		**27383**
Payments					
Legacy Project	General Secretary	16746		17500	
(Note 5)	Projects (CT insert, MB launch, Sponsorships)	6948		0	
	General Secretary Expenses (incl. travel & postage)	1057		3750	
			24750		21250
Publications	Modern Believing	3913		4809	
	SOTT (Legacy Project) (Note 7)	5974		6949	
	Editors	2500		2500	
	Other Publications	0		690	
	Legacy Relaunch	0		0	
			12388		14948
Communications	Communications Officer	6481		6448	
	Advertising	2503		1651	
	Website costs	552			
			9535		8099

Admin	Administrator	8043		8634	
	Accounting Fees	441		420	
	Trustees Room hire	248		0	
	Admin expenses	1739		1193	
	Miscellaneous	262		235	
			10733		10482
Conferences	Annual Conference (Note 1)	19295		1275	
	Council Residential	1098		300	
	Other	0			
			20393		1575
	Total Payments		**77799**		**56354**
Surplus/deficit			**-42173**		**-28971**

Notes

1. Expenses: The Annual Conference 2022 had to change at very short notice to online delivery due to the rail strikes and extreme heat. This resulted in a significant loss due to the need to honour costs at the venue although a welcome discount was negotiated.
2. Receipts: As a result of the changed delivery mechanism of the conference for 2022 a substantial amount of refunds were processed but many delegates refused refunds and some paid for online access only. £75 was received in donations to student bursaries.
3. Modern Church receives payments from LUP in relation to subscriptions from libraries and institutions, referred to as royalties
4. Donations: A residual amount from the Patrick Lewin estate was received during the year.
5. Legacy Projects - legacy expenditure in 2022 relates to the work and remuneration of the General Secretary and SOTT (see Note 6). The expenditure of £6498 related to the publication of a Church Times insert and a Church Time sponsorship deal. Of the funds allocated to legacy projects just over £66k remains.
6. Signs of the Times (SOTT) continues to show high costs since a re-design in 2019 and is considered as part of our Legacy Project. Some savings have been made by changing print supplier.
7. Investments - 2022 was a poor year for the stock market with substantial economic instability and the value of the CCLA shareholding took a significant hit. We also withdrew a total of £50,000 in value during the course of the year to pay for our Legacy projects.
8. There is a small positive discrepancy of £90 in the CAF bank balance - this is reflected in the difference between the closing balance in the 2021 balance sheet and the opening balances in the 2022 accounts.

Bank and Investment Balances at 31 December 2021

FUNDS STATEMENT - Members' Funds			2022	2022	2021	2021
Opening Balances						
Undesignated	(Note 8)		217573		145731	
Designated		Reserves	263429		263429	
	(Note 5)	Legacy Projects	96730		124929	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	746	578478	776	534865
Surplus/deficit Cash Flow			-42173		-28971	
Unrealised holdings gains/losses	(Note 7)		-63573	-105746	72494	43523
Closing Funds				**472732**		**578388**
Represented by						
Undesignated			142476		217483	
Designated		Reserves	263429		263429	
	(Note 5)	Legacy Projects	66006		96730	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	821		746	
Total Funds				**472732**		**578388**
Members' Assets						
CAF Bank			25861		18892	
Paypal			1053		122	
CCLA Deposit			1348		1331	20345
CCLA Shares - revaluation at 31 Dec)	(Note 7)		444470	**472732**	558043	558043
Total				**472732**		**578388**

Independent Examiner's Report
to the Trustees of Modern Church
For the year ended 31st December 2021
Registered Charity no. 281573

[REPORT AWAITED FROM THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER]

Modern Church Officers and Post-holders: 2022

President and Chair of Council: Professor Elaine Graham

Vice Chair of Council Anthony Woollard

General Secretary: Alison Webster

Secretary: Revd Canon Dr Jan van der Lely

Treasurer: Revd Diane Kutar

Vice Presidents:

Prof Paul Badham
The Revd Jonathan Clatworthy
Prof Elaine Graham
Rev Dr Nicholas Henderson
Dr Peter Mills
The Most Rev Barry Morgan
The Very Rev Prof Martyn Percy
The Rt Rev Dr John Saxbee
The Rt Rev Brian Smith
The Rt Revd Tim Stevens
The Revd Canon Richard Truss
The Rt Revd Martin Wharton

Modern Church Council Members during 2022

Revd Dr Jeyan Anketell
Jean Barnett[1]
Hugh Bryant[1]
Revd Helen Burnett
Revd Dr Lorraine Cavanagh
Very Revd Dr Jonathan Draper
Revd Canon David Driscoll
Professor Elaine Graham
Revd David Howard
Revd David James[1]
Revd Tom Keates[1]
Dr Anne-Marie Kramer
Revd Diane Kutar[1] (Treasurer, elected annually)
Rosalind Lund
Revd Stephen Parsons
Revd Canon Trevor Pitt
Revd Canon Dr Alan Race
Professor Adrian Thatcher
Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes
Revd Canon Dr Jan van der Lely
Professor John Vickerman[1]
Anthony Woollard
Revd Sonya Wratten[1]

[1] Term of office ends at the end of the 2023 AGM but can stand for re-election

In bold – current trustees

MODERN CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 281573

Accounts

Modern Church
faith in the world

Annual Report of the Trustees for the year 2021

to be presented to the Annual General Meeting on 20th July 2022 at 2.15 p.m. at High Leigh Conference Centre and on Zoom

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2 The Orchard, Dowell Close, Taunton TA2 6BN

Website: www.modernchurch.org.uk
Email: office@modernchurch.org.uk
Registered charity no: 281573

ABOUT MODERN CHURCH

Faith in the World

We understand that

- genuine faith is committed to the search for truth, wherever it comes from
- it is possible to think and talk about God in ways that make sense in our time and culture

We encourage

- open discussion: freedom to explore ideas, ask questions and change our minds without fear of disapproval
- critical scholarship: keeping up to date with good research, examining the implications of new insights and discoveries
- willingness to change: so that what we believe now can be expressed in the things our churches do and say.

We expect our theology to be

- public: talking the language of ordinary people, not that of a religious club
- relevant: engaging with what is going on in society, informing our faith and how we live
- respectful: willing to learn from others, within and outside Christianity, since we accept that we don't have all the answers.

Public benefit

As a charitable organisation we consider that our objects have the following public benefits:

- we have a duty within our present-day society to present Christianity in a way which can be understood by ordinary people
- we encourage all church people, both ordained and lay, to play a full part in the governance and activities of their churches and foster greater engagement with the mission of the churches to support the poor, sick and needy in society
- by engaging in research and study we can help our fellow Christians come to a deeper understanding of their faith and how it has developed
- our approach to theology will encourage people of all faiths to better understand one another thus promoting constructive relations between the faiths.

Report from the Chair

As a society, and in the church, we seem caught up in paradox – or is it contradiction? (Only a thin line separates the two.) Examples abound. We live in a democracy but the government seems determined to undermine the principles of accountability which are essential to any democracy. The pandemic is declared over but there are continuing high levels of infection everywhere. The promise of levelling-up has become a mirage. Governmental U-turns upon U-turns keep mounting up. On the church front, we follow the mantra that "we are all made in the image of God", but that fails to translate into reality as the LLF process has been interminable, while LGBTQ+ "images of God" continue to feel shunned, marginalized, and patronized. Safeguarding culture intended to protect the vulnerable has turned into a nightmare for some who have been wrongly accused. The mission to seek imaginative theology fit for purpose gets reduced to a numbers game.

But we have no business becoming Eeyore. The progressiveness of Modern Church continues to make its voice heard and when it cuts through, the response is usually celebratory. For example, my preaching about the symbolism of the Christmas narratives in my local church last year elicited some thankful responses at the church door: "I've never heard that before, about the symbolism of the Christmas stories, and it was so refreshing, made my Christmas." Perhaps this represents no major awakening for most of us, but it confirms me in thinking that there's desire for progressive Christian thought out there and it's for us – MC! – to parade it fearlessly. Over this last year, we have tried parading this fearlessly with our two inserts in the *Church Times* and generally the response was very positive. As was the reaction to our mini zoom series of issues in Christology, recalling the Girton College debate 100 years ago.

MC does produce stimulating materials – through our conferences, through *Modern Believing* and *Signs of the Times*, through our blogs, through local groups and the online Forum, through our emerging close relative, the Public Square group, through our Communications output, through the tireless work of the General Secretary, through the committed support of our President. There is much to feel pleased about – paradoxically! We have every reason to be profoundly grateful to all our officers, organizers, writers, and volunteers.

This is my last report as MC Chair of Trustees and Council. I have been in post for five years and feel privileged to have been part of an enterprise that is so vitally needed, given the near-anti-intellectualism of the church. Most of all, it is the stimulus provided by friends and colleagues in the movement that has been my most valued companion over this time. The suspension of the in-person annual conference for the last two years has been a loss, but hopefully that corner has now been turned.

For the future, there are some ongoing issues for the next Chair, General Secretary, Trustees and Council to confront – thorough analysis of our membership model, *Modern Believing* and *Signs of the Times* productions (online only or mixed mode?), the development

of new digital outlets for progressive Christian thought, possible new partnerships, to name just a small number.

Before ending this report, I must give a special thanks to Jonathan Draper who has been our General Secretary for the last five years. Jonathan is a person of many gifts, and MC has benefitted hugely from his period with us. He set about commending MC's outlook with great energy and intelligent imaginative flair. We are truly grateful. However, he is not disappearing, as trustees agreed that he would play a lead role in co-ordinating, designing and promoting our next year's conference on behalf of the Chair of Conference, the Revd Sonia Hicks, who is currently rather busy acting as President of the Methodist Conference for 2021/22. The MC conference will embrace themes of ethnicity, culture, colonialism, mission – and more. So, Jonathan, go well, but welcome back!

All told, I am more hopeful than ever about the future of Modern Church. There is no reason not to think that the future is bright. As I have said over the last two years, and in spite of pandemics, we are in good heart.

Alan Race, Chair, Trustees and Council

Report from the General Secretary

The period since my last report has continued to be one of (mostly) virtual activity. The irony, as I noted last year, is that meeting virtually has meant meeting about things more often. Like many others, we have become accustomed to Zoom…

Signs of the Times and *Modern Believing*

Signs of the Times has continued to flourish under the leadership of Anthony Woollard. Apart from some distribution issues, this continues to be a very good and important part of what MC offers, and it's good to see the circulation growing. New Affiliates have come (and some have gone). As with membership in general, retention is an issue. Trustees have begun to look at ways of having more direct control over our membership information, and our Communications Officer (Joe Priestley) has suggested useful technological responses.

A 're-launch' of *Modern Believing* took place on YouTube in January 2021. Rather more people 'attended' the re-launch online than might have done in-person (90-odd on the night with more viewing it on YouTube later). The re-launch of *MB* has been very successful in terms of design, policy, and content, and Adrian has done a splendid job of securing a wide range of scholars to write for us.

Sponsorship

In my last Annual Report I mentioned that I would say more about a sponsorship deal with the *Church Times* (CT). We have signed a deal which makes MC sponsors of all the CT Festivals: Preaching, Faith & Literature. This gives us a continuous presence on the CT

website, as well as good exposure during the festivals themselves. The deal remains in place until September 2022.

The success of the CT printed insert in October 2020 led the Trustees to do it again, this time in January 2022, with much of planning done in the latter part of 2021. Joe Priestley produced a visually attractive insert and we had a headline article from Martyn Percy and several others. This was not as successful as the previous one in terms of member-recruitment, but was widely read and helped to keep MC in the eyes of a significant group.

So, along with the insert, we have had many opportunities to be seen in the CT and on their website during 2021.

Other Organizations

We have made some slightly more 'formal' arrangements to cooperate with organizations we already do some work with: Inclusive Church (of which I am a Trustees on behalf of MC), One Body One Faith, Open Table, SCM, PCN. These organizations have together issued a Partnership Statement (it can be found on the MC website). We have also become a partner with a new organization called MoSAIC, working towards a more inclusive church (there was an article about it in the CT 26/2/21). At this point both groupings are 'talking' more than 'doing' anything, though our main grouping of Partners are looking to offer a range of resources for theological education which is a prime area for MC. We have been working towards the possibility of a joint day conference with The Campaign for Equal Marriage to follow up the Church of England's LLF discussions. I have had about 15 (virtual) meetings with other groups during the course of 2021.

During 2021 a number of possible events have been discussed and the planning for them begun. I've mention one with the Campaign for Equal Marriage re LLF. We have planned and delivered a three-part lecture series (online) called 'Christ and Controversy' with three distinguished speakers (including our own Chair of Trustees) to mark 100 years since the Girton Conference; we have been discussing with Iain MacGilchrist the possibility of a two part series on neuroscience and the sacred. We have been planning our own conferences too, with a very successful virtual conference in 2021, and much planning for an in-person (with online attendance possible) conference in 2022.

Each of these activities has, of course, a wide range of 'sub-activities' within them: meetings, emails, telephone calls, papers to write, and, even occasionally, time and space to think. In all of that I am grateful to Alan Race for his gentle and encouraging supervision of my work, and for the support and encouragement of the Trustees.

My time as General Secretary comes to an end at the end of August 2022, so this is my last formal contribution to the Annual Report. I have taken part in preliminary and preparatory discussion about 'succession planning' and want to wish Modern Church continued success in the years to come.

Jonathan Draper, General Secretary

Modern Believing

1. Re-launch
The journal was 're-launched' on January 28th. Originally planned as a physical meeting at St Martin-in-the-Fields, the pandemic required instead a more modest occasion on Zoom and YouTube. The smart, contemporary design, with a distinctive palette (which colours the covers of each edition differently), a new typeface, and new article layout and spacing, is intended also to signal a change for the better, not only in appearance but also in focus, content, and the overall quality of contributions.

2. Editorial Policy
2020 was the first year in which the new editorial policy was brought into operation, viz.,

i) to cease to rely on uncommissioned, peer-reviewed articles for the non-conference editions;

ii) to invite articles from established scholars in accordance with themes for each edition, decided by the Editor; and

iii) to provide a sharper focus for the journal, based on the need a) to update our readers with developments in the different branches of Theology, and b) to provide a progressive alternative to 'theology-lite' conservative assumptions and positions.

The policy has given rise to outstanding articles from well-known authors (including 4 members of the Board); enabled the future of the journal to be properly planned; and provided space for the work of emerging authors, particularly women and non-Caucasian women and men. Contributors receive no remuneration for their work, so the journal relies entirely on their good will. As the programme is now set for the next 3 years I continue to be surprised and pleased by the flow of kind and positive responses to my requests for specific contributions to the various themes of the different editions.

3. Content in 2021
62.1 was intended to be the edition reporting on Modern Church's 2020 conference, 'Living in Love and Faith: Theological Transformations'. The conference, due to covid-19, was cancelled, but four of the speakers presented their talks in article form in 62.1, and the edition, together with powerful blogs on Modern Church's website, provided a constructive and critical contribution to the 'discussions' about sex in the CofE.

62.2 received praise for the 'conversations old and new' between theology and the sciences. Modern Church hoped to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Girton Conference with a day conference in the summer, but the pandemic resulted in a change of plan – a series of 3 on-line lectures instead. However, **62.3**, 'Christology Now', planned in 2019 in anticipation of the Girton anniversary, captured something of the progressive spirit of our predecessors. **62.4**, on 'Postcolonial Theology', began with strong advice from Board members about prospective authors and content, leading to an invitation to the Revd Dr Duncan Dormor to edit and contribute to the edition. His honest grappling with his

position as head of an Anglican mission agency and an advocate of contemporary postcolonial theology, was one of the highlights of the journal's year.

4. Content in 2022 and 2023

Both years are now full. 63.1 on Theology and the Climate Emergency; 63.2 God's Relation to the World: Discovering Panentheism; 63.3 Prayer: Interdisciplinary Perspectives; 63.4 The Holy Spirit; 64.1 Conference edition; 64.2 "He is Risen Indeed"; 64.3 Theology, Agriculture and Meat; 64.4 Celebrating Progressive Women.

5. Content from 2024 on

As always, I rely on suggestions from Board members, as well as from the Trustees and members of Modern Church to help set the programme. Inevitably planning for the new quinquennium is sketchy. The details so far are: 65.1 conference 2023 edition; 65.2 Theology and Poetry; 65.3 Recent Biblical Scholarship: (1) the Hebrew Bible; 65.4 World religions edition; 66.1 conference 2024 edition; 66.1 Recent Biblical Scholarship: (2) The New Testament.

In the next quinquennium I would like to place more emphasis on our stated aim 'to update our readers with developments in the different branches of Theology'. *I appeal to Board members* to contact me (at apath@sky.com) with their suggestions for any themes, topics and suggestions for authors (and perhaps guest editors), as long as they pursue 'the advancement of the Christian faith for the benefit of the public', and the 'open and critical study of the Christian faith and its relevance in the contemporary world'.

6. Reviews

Once again, the Revd Dr Michael Brierley has spared no effort in editing over 100 reviews in 2021, always matching an appropriate reviewer to a particular book. Since each edition became thematic, Michael has arranged the production of reviews so that the bulk of them support the edition's theme. For example, in 62.4, the first 14 reviews all supported the postcolonial theme of the edition, greatly adding weight and importance to it.

7. Gender and ethnicity of authors

Progress towards equalization regarding the gender of authors is slower than I had hoped. This year 12 authors were male, and 6 female. (The two authors who were unable to contribute due to covid-19 were both female.) In 2022, there are 15 male and 8 female contributors. However in 2023, the position will be reversed – 6 male, and 15 female contributors. Initial invitations to write are equal between women and men. No statistics are asked for or kept about ethnicity. However, it will be obvious that a growing number of writers are non-white and non-European.

I record my thanks to all Board members for continuing to lend their esteemed names to the journal, to provide advice, and often articles and reviews as well. I thank the Trustees of Modern Church for their support and enthusiasm for the changes of the last 3 years, and also to the smaller group of Trustees (the 'Editorial Team') who together with the Reviews

Editor help to manage the journal's quotidian affairs and share a spirit of optimism about its future.

Adrian Thatcher, Editor Modern Believing

Membership Report

2021 was the eighth full year for which the subscriptions to Modern Church were managed by Liverpool University Press (LUP) and operating on a calendar year subscription. The management of membership has now been taken inhouse by LUP. Modern Church has continued with its Affiliate member scheme as well. The numbers of subscribers for the three year previous period were as follows:

Subscription Type	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Individual Member	218	199	194
Joint Members	21	16	14
Life Members	8	8	8
Honorary Members	0	0	0
Affiliates			45
Total Members	**252**	**223**	**216 Full members** **45 Affiliate members**

The breakdown of Membership figures can be explained as follows:

Subscription Type	**Total**	**Notes**
UK member	118	
USA member	1	
Rest of world member	1	
Concessionary member	70	
Joint UK member	7	
Joint UK concessionary member	7	
UK student member	4	
Free	2	Comms Officer & Administrator

Ian Munro , Administrator & Finance Officer

Modern Church Forum

The Modern Church Forum was first convened a year ago. It is designed to give members a platform of their own from which to give papers or speak on any subject that interests them and is in keeping with the Modern Church ethos. The Forum meets online once every six weeks and is convened by Lorraine Cavanagh.

Lorraine Cavanagh, Forum Convenor

Signs of the Times Report

During a year which continued to be dominated by the pandemic and restriction to online-only activities for much of the time, our quarterly newsletter continued as a vital means of communication with our membership and others, particularly as we developed the new category of Affiliates for whom this is the principal point of contact.

Two themes dominated the year. Living in Love and Faith was addressed in particularly by a fine article from Dr Charlie Bell, one of our Council members and a medical scientist. The second theme, rightly occupying much more space, was the climate crisis, on which our online-only Annual Conference focused; from articles by Jonathan Clatworthy to a very rich account of Conference itself by Hugh Bryant, it was made clear that this issue was the most fundamental "sign of the times". Space was found also for such items as a sermon by Chris Savage on the 50th anniversary of his ordination – a trip down memory lane for many of us who are of his generation, but hopefully thought-provoking to those who are younger.

Along with our website, *Signs* has become in a real sense our principal "shop window". As well as being distributed to members and affiliates, it can be made available to enquirers as well as those attending other events in which we are involved. If any members would like extra copies to distribute to enquirers in their own church or neighbourhood, or at events which they attend, they should request these from our administrator (office@modernchurch.org.uk) who will try to accommodate them.

Articles by members (and indeed others) about contemporary issues of Christian faith and practice, likely to be of interest to our readership, are always welcome, though it may not always be possible to find space for them at once. The management of book reviews remains in the capable hands of Trevor Pitt. Trevor is always looking for books to review and people to review them, and your suggestions will be appreciated.

Thanks are due to him, and to the other members of the editorial team – our General Secretary, our Communications Officer, and Lorraine Cavanagh and Helen Burnett – and to our designer Richard Remington; but above all to our contributors.

Anthony Woollard, Editor, Signs of the Times

Treasurer's Report

Covid continued to rule our actions and meetings throughout 2021. As a result both our Council meeting in March and our Annual Conference in July were held via Zoom on-line as was our Annual General Meeting. Our expenditure throughout 2021 was correspondingly less than would otherwise have been expected.

Legacy
We began the year with just under £125,000 of the original amount which was set aside for special projects. During the course of the year we spent approximately £30,000 of our planned spending over a five year period on designated legacy projects including spending on SOTT, the relaunch of MB and the salary of our General Secretary. This leaves just under £96k of the legacy for continuing projects which have started or for new ones. During the course of the next year, Trustees and the new General Secretary will need to review the legacy and reserves policies to ensure that we can continue to work with other organizations and fellow travellers to bring the insights of Modern Church to a wider audience, as well as protecting the continued existence of the Society.

Signs of the Times
This continues to be sent to all members and affiliate members in its new design format. It is currently costing just under £7,000 pa.

Modern Believing
Adrian Thatcher, a Trustee, is paid an annual honorarium of £2,500 as Editor as previously agreed by Trustees. The cost of printing and posting out of MB has gone down by approximately £1,500 – due to a reduction in membership numbers. This is disappointing, although royalty income from sales to libraries is about the same.

Subscriptions and Membership
Income from membership subscriptions is down again this year. Affiliate members are listed separately to enable comparisons to be drawn in future years.

Conference
High Leigh conference centre has treated us very well over the enforced cancellation of the 2020 annual conference due to Covid-19 and initially agreed to transfer our deposit to 2021. This deposit has now been held over for another year for the 2022 conference.

Future Treasurer
I have continued to hold the role of Acting Treasurer over the last year, with the help of some bookkeeping on the part of our Administrator, Ian Munro, who was appointed in the spring of 2021. I am now very pleased to be able to propose Diane Kutar as our new Treasurer at the AGM. Diane will be familiar to most of you through her previous role as

Administrator and I am most grateful to her for being willing to stand for election at this AGM. She has excellent credentials in the field of finance and bookkeeping and has the advantage of knowing the workings of Modern Church from the inside.

Policies

Legacy Policy

MC has been very fortunate to receive a number of fairly substantial legacies from former members over the years for which Trustees are very grateful. We wish to encourage members to continue to remember the Society in their wills in this way to help ensure that the work continues for future generations of church people. In 2017 we received two significant legacies from former members of MC - £231,000 from Paddy Lewin and £5,000 from Joan Dorrell.

Reserves Policy

In light of the receipt of substantial legacy funds in 2017 and the decision to pay a salary to our General Secretary, it was agreed to modify our Reserves Policy for the time being. Thus the legacies received during 2017 have been considered as a project fund to pay for the General Secretary's salary and expenses and to provide the necessary support for him to develop the work of MC over the five years of his contract. It was agreed at this time that the reserves held by MC previous to 2017 and which provided an annual income towards the day-to-day running expenses of MC of over £8,500 should continue to be held as designated reserves.

Data Protection Policy

Modern Church adheres to Government guidance on data protection. We pay an annual registration fee to the Information Commissioner. Our membership records are managed by Liverpool University Press who publish and distribute *Modern Believing* on our behalf. Affiliate member records are managed in-house.

Independent Examiner

I am grateful to Jonathan Rudge once again for agreeing to act as our Independent Examiner and his report is attached.

Rosalind Lund, Acting Treasurer

Modern Church

Receipts and Payment Accounts to 31 December 2021

		Note	2021	2021	2020	2020
			£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS						
Subscriptions	Members		9,071		11,234	11,234
	Affiliates		695			
Gift Aid				9,766		
Investment Income			14,688	14,688	15,061	15,061
Conferences	Annual Conference	1	1,410		2,949	
	Council Residential		0		1,354	
	Other conferences		0		0	4,303
				1,410		
Miscellaneous	Donations	2	295		125	
	Publications (MB royalties)	3	1,153		1,113	
	Other inc book sales		70	1,519	0	1,238
TOTAL RECEIPTS				**27,383**		**31,836**

PAYMENTS			2021	2021	2020	2020
			£	£	£	£
Legacy Project	Gen Sec		17,500		17,500	
	Greenbelt (due 2020 from 2019)	4	0		6,598	
	Projects (Inc Church + CT project)	5	3,750		6,352	
	Gen Sec Travel Expenses		0		846	31,296
				21,250		
Publications	Modern Believing		4,809		6,374	
	SOTT (Legacy project)	6	6,949		5,825	
	Editors		2,500		1,267	
	Other - purchase of books inc MB copies etc.		690		0	
				14,948		13,466
Communications	Comms Officer		6,448		6,985	
	Website costs & advertising	5	1,651		1,613	
				8,099		8,598

Admin	Administrator		8,634		7,296	
	Accounting fees		420		430	
	Trustees room hire		0		210	
	Admin Expenses (inc post re Affiliates and insurance)		1,193		2,073	
	Other		235		35	
				10,482		10,043
Conferences	Annual Conference	1	1,275		2,950	
	Council Residential 2022		300		1,700	
	Other			1,575		4,650
TOTAL PAYMENTS				**56,354**		**49,411**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT				**-28,971**		**-17,576**

Notes to the Accounts for 2021

1. Conference 2020 was cancelled - some people who had paid deposits or full fees chose to have them transferred to set against the 2021 conference, now carried forward to 2022; others chose to make a donation to MC's general funds. High Leigh agreed to transfer the deposit paid for accommodation in 2019 to 2021 and a further roll-over has been agreed to take us to 2022. A total of £2076 has been transferred towards the 2022 conference (a mixture of deposits and full payments). Conference 2021 was held on-line only and is accounted for here.
2. Donations - as a result of the cancelled conference for 2020 (for which payments were made in 2019 and 2020) a total of £1,006 was most generously donated. No donations towards student bursaries at conference were received in 2021, however a total of £170 was received in donations towards a leaving gift for our retiring Administrator, Diane Kutar.
3. Modern Church receives payments from LUP in relation to subscriptions from libraries and institutions, referred to as royalties.
4. Greenbelt was cancelled in 2020, but MC had already decided to focus on other projects for 2021. The payment shown for 2020 relates to a late invoice received from Greenbelt for 2019.
5. Legacy Projects - in addition to the expenses relating to the work of the General Secretary, limited in 2020 and 2021 by Covid. The re-launch of Modern Believing including a redesign under the Editorship of Adrian Thatcher actually took place in 2021 and was held on-line. We supported Inclusive Church with their campaign to get more liberal members of General Synod. We have started another Legacy project with two sponsorship arrangements with the Church Times. The cost of Legacy Projects (including SOTT since re-design) totalled £28,199 in 2021 (Legacy projects + SOTT).
6. Signs of the Times (SOTT) continues to show high costs since a re-design in 2019 and is considered as part of our Legacy Project.

7. Investments - 2021 was a good year for the stock market and the shareholding ended with a higher value than it started with. We withdrew a total of £20,000 in value during the course of the year to pay for our Legacy projects. There is no guarantee that in future years our investments will continue to increase in value.

Bank and Investment Balances at 31 December 2021			**2021**	**2021**	**2020**	**2020**
			£	**£**	**£**	**£**
FUNDS STATEMENT - Members' Funds						
Opening Balances						
Undesignated			145,731		110,908	
Designated		Reserves	263,429		263,429	
	5	Legacy Projects	124,929		163,247	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	776	534,865	451	538,035
Surplus/deficit Cash Flow			-28,971		-36,217	
Unrealised holdings gains/losses			72,494	43,523	33,047	-3,170
Closing Funds				**578,388**		**534,865**
Represented by						
Undesignated			217,483		145,731	
Designated		Reserves	263,429		263,429	
		Legacy Projects	96,730		124,929	
Restricted		Student bursary fund	746		776	
Total Funds				**578,388**		**534,865**
Members' Assets						
CAF Bank			18,892		28,086	
Paypal			122		135	
CCLA Deposit	1		1,331	20,345	1,330	29,551
CCLA Shares (NB £20,000 withdrawn 16 Nov) - revaluation at 31 Dec to £558,043	7		558,043	558,043	505,314	505,314
Total				**578,388**		**534,865**

Annual Conference Current Year (2021)

				2021 £
Receipts	Conf fees			1,410
Payments				
	High Leigh Deposit moved to 2022 (£2,247)	1		
	Advertising and expenses inc repaid fees			1,402
Net				**8**
cancelled 2020 conference		1		
	Conference fees received		5,819	5,819
	Repaid conference fees (2020/1)		2,737	
	Donations (2020)		1,006	
	Rollover to 2021/2022		2,076	
	Total accounted for			**5,819**
Student donations				
	Brought forward to 2021		776	
	student place		-30	
	Total available at Dec 2021			**746**
Legacy projects (see Note 5 on p.13)		Funds brought forward	124,929	
		Spending in 2021	-28,199	
		Funds remaining		**96,730**

Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees of The Modern Church
For the year ended 31st December 2021
Registered Charity no. 281573

Independent examiner's statement
I report on the accounts of the Modern Church ("theTrust") for the year ended 31 December 2021, which are set out on the attached pages and show a cash deficit of £28,971, together with funds totalling £578,388.

Responsibilities and basis of report
As the charity trustees of the Trust, you 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 Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

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

Jonathan H. Rudge MA FCA
20 Blackthorne Close
Solihull B91 1PF
21st April 2022

Modern Church Officers and Post-holders: 2021

President	Professor Elaine Graham
Chair of Council	Canon Alan Race
Vice Chair of Council	Mr Anthony Woollard
General Secretary	The Very Rev'd Dr Jonathan Draper
Secretary	Rev Dr Jan van der Lely
Acting Treasurer	Mrs Rosalind Lund (from June 2020)

Vice Presidents:

Prof Paul Badham
Prof Elaine Graham
Rev Dr Nicholas Henderson
Dr Peter Mills
The Most Rev Barry Morgan
The Very Rev Prof Martyn Percy
The Rt Rev Dr John Saxbee
The Rt Rev Brian Smith
The Rt Revd Tim Stevens
Rev Canon Richard Truss
The Rt Rev Martin Wharton
Rev Jonathan Clatworthy

Council Members during 2021

Rev Dr Jeyan Anketell [1]
Mrs Jean Barnett
Dr Charlie Bell [1]
Hugh Bryant
Rev. Helen Burnett
Rev Dr Lorraine Cavanagh
Rev Jonathan Clatworthy [1]
Rev Canon David Driscoll [1]
Rev Ruth Fitter [1]
Prof. Elaine Graham
Rev David Howard
Rev David James
Rev Tom Keates
Rev Diane Kutar
Rev Tim Laundon [1]
Mrs Rosalind Lund
Rev Stephen Parsons [1]
Canon Trevor Pitt
Canon Dr Alan Race
Prof. Adrian Thatcher
Rev Dr Miranda Threlfall Holmes
Richard Truss
Rev Dr Jan van der Lely [1]
John Vickerman
Mr Anthony Woollard
Rev Sonya Wratten

[1] Term of office ends at the 2022 AGM but can stand for re-election

In bold – current trustees

MODERN CHURCH

England & Wales - Charity number 281573

Accounts

Modern Church
faith in the world

Annual Report of the Trustees for the year 2020

to be presented to the Annual General Meeting on

14th June 2021 at 7.30 pm

On Zoom

Office address:
22 The Kiln, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 0LU

Website: www.modernchurch.org.uk

Email: office@modernchurch.org.uk

Registered charity no: 281573

ABOUT MODERN CHURCH

faith in the world

We understand that

- genuine faith is committed to the search for truth, wherever it comes from
- it is possible to think and talk about God in ways that make sense in our time and culture

We encourage

- open discussion: freedom to explore ideas, ask questions and change our minds without fear of disapproval
- critical scholarship: keeping up to date with good research, examining the implications of new insights and discoveries
- willingness to change: so that what we believe now can be expressed in the things our churches do and say.

We expect our theology to be

- public: talking the language of ordinary people, not that of a religious club
- relevant: engaging with what is going on in society, informing our faith and how we live
- respectful: willing to learn from others, within and outside Christianity, since we accept that we don't have all the answers.

Public benefit

As a charitable organisation we consider that our objects have the following public benefits:

- we have a duty within our present-day society to present Christianity in a way which can be understood by ordinary people
- we encourage all church people, both ordained and lay, to play a full part in the governance and activities of their churches and foster greater engagement with the mission of the churches to support the poor, sick and needy in society

- by engaging in research and study we can help our fellow Christians come to a deeper understanding of their faith and how it has developed
- our approach to theology will encourage people of all faiths to better understand one another thus promoting constructive relations between the faiths.

Report from the Chair

Here we are: second year of the pandemic. The UK is in the premier league as far as infections and deaths are concerned. We have learned of our systemic inequalities across a cornucopia of fault-lines – economic, educational, ethnic, health, employment, disability, etc, etc. Brexit and Covid have elided – or should that be collided? – creating a deeply uncertain future. Column inches are now filling up with speculations of how any new normal must not be a return to an old normal. But the verdict's still out.

Churches have Zoomed and YouTubed. Liturgy has wobbled, sometimes happily, sometimes disastrously. We have missed the Body of Christ's communal imperative. Coffee hour on screen is not quite the same as in the flesh. Nevertheless, Online Church has done well in some manifestations.

Through the year MC trustees and Council have also zoomed. Business has had to be curtailed of course during the year, but we have planned and then re-planned. In particular we missed the in-person learning, togetherness and banter of our annual conference. The theme was chosen to coincide with the publication of the Church of England's 'Living in Love and Faith' report, and therefore was both timely and a chance to present some alternative progressive thinking on issues of sex, gender, and relationships. In the event that report was delayed and the conference transferred to 2022.

The lack of meeting together in physical space did not stop the trustees from forging ahead with other planning of different kinds. These included:

1. Making arrangements for a conference in 2021 on the urgency of the Climate Emergency, its challenges, fears, and hopes in the light of faith, and to be chaired by Dr Christopher Southgate from the University of Exeter (whose 2018 book is titled Theology in a Suffering World: Glory and Longing, where 'glory', as the blurb explains, is not necessarily about beauty or radiance, but is better understood as a sign of the unknowable depths of God). The conference however had to be transferred to online 13-14 July, 2021. But the promise of strong and informative presentations from top-class speakers has not been lost, and we expect an extensive take-up of interest.
2. In October we launched a splendid insert of MC as a marketing opportunity.
3. Responses to the November publication of Living in Love and Faith were arranged as blog posts on the website. Again, some first class

writers were invited to produce critical and thoughtful pieces for us to ponder.

4. Planning for a conference day on ‘Christology’, probably at Oriel College, Oxford, was initiated as an anniversary MC event of the Girton College conference 100 years previously which had provoked considerable controversy and pushed MC firmly into the limelight.
5. The developing website continued to attract attention from people feeling themselves to be in the theological wilderness and wanting to belong to a community of thoughtful theological enquirers.

2020 was also the year when the 3-year review of the General Secretary’s post was carried out and we are pleased to report that Jonathan’s tenure with MC was extended for a further 2-year period in accordance with his contractual arrangements. On a sad note, we received news of the death of David Simon who was a much-valued member of MC and our treasurer for the last 3 years. I attended his funeral where love for David, from family, friends, and colleagues was much in evidence. Rosalind Lund kindly stepped in as an interim treasurer and we are most grateful for her willingness and generosity in doing this.

There are many volunteers who contribute generously of their time and energy to make MC the vibrant movement that it is. In this regard, let me pay tribute to the Trustees and Council who contribute so much to our work. Most especially, we are grateful to Diane Kutar, our Administrator, for keeping us focused and organized. We are delighted that Diane is to be ordained this summer and we wish her prayerful best wishes for her future, knowing that her future parish is to be one of the luckiest in the Church of England. We are grateful too to Professor Adrian Thatcher whose enthusiasm at the helm as Managing Editor for Modern Believing is unbounded. Canon Dr Michael Brierley continues as Book Reviews editor, a role which he fulfils with consummate skill and for which we are thankful. Anthony Woollard continues with equal enthusiasm as editor for Signs of the Times which continues to receive accolade upon accolade; we are grateful for the enormous work that he puts into each production. We are thankful also that Canon Trevor Pitt is Book Reviews editor for SOTT.

No organization these days has a chance of achieving much without a strong profile on social media and through a clear and engaging website. We are lucky to have Joe Priestley at the helm on these fronts and I am thankful for his professionalism and skills.

Professor Elaine Graham has been our President since the July 2019 conference and we are enormously grateful that she accepted the position. She is greatly respected as a theologian and has contributed

much wisdom to MC’s life and purpose for many years. Her support for MC is a great boost for MC.

Finally, I express our thanks to Jonathan Draper, our General Secretary, who continues to stimulate Trustees and Council with ideas and options for future development. He is a great asset, networker, and guiding light. His contributions to MC should not be underestimated.

In spite of all the pandemic hurdles, MC is in good heart and is clear that there remains much for liberal Christian thought to do. Thank you to all our members for what you contribute and what you stimulate.

Alan Race, Chair

Report from the General Secretary

The period since my last report has been one of real and virtual activity. The final in person activities were taking Modern Church (MC) to the Church Times 'Festival of Faith & Literature' at Bloxham School, and our residential Council Meeting in Leeds in mid-March just before the first lockdown. An irony of not meeting in person as MC Trustees has been an ability to meet more frequently about only one or two issues and this has facilitated some quicker decision-making.

Signs of the Times and Modern Believing

Signs of the Times has continued its new life under the leadership of Anthony Woollard. Apart from distribution issues, this continues to be a very good and important part of what MC offers and it's good to see the circulation growing.

A great deal of work took place during 2020 to look at the design and policies of Modern Believing under the leadership of Adrian Thatcher. Adrian and I met with Rebecca Paveley about design and re-launch issues a number of times in 2020, culminating in a new design 'soft launched' with the October 2020 issue. In fact we had planned for a re-launch event at St James' Piccadilly in October 2020, but, because of lockdown restrictions, were unable to. The rescheduled event, for April 2021, was eventually cancelled, and a re-launch took place on YouTube in January 2021. The re-launch of MB has been very successful in terms of design, policy, and content, and Adrian has done a splendid job of securing a wide range of scholars to write for us.

Sponsorship

The 2020 Greenbelt Festival was cancelled because of Covid restrictions and Trustees took the opportunity to review our sponsorship of the event. In the end Trustees decided not to continue our sponsorship of Greenbelt. The Society for the Study of Theology (SST) annual conference was also put online only, and our opportunity for sponsorship fell by the way. We do anticipate continuing our sponsorship of SST in the future, and we advertised our re-launch of MB through the SST network. We also continued to be in contact with the *Church Times* (CT) about their various festivals throughout 2020, and those conversations have borne fruit in 2021: more about that in the 2021 Report.

While not strictly sponsorship, MC used our growing relationship with the CT to place a printed-in insert into the CT in late October 2020 with sample articles, information about MC, and information about how to join or affiliate with MC. This was a considerable success. About 30 new members and the same number of new Affiliates resulted from the insert,

and the next month was very busy with posting a welcome letter and copies to those who joined as a result of the insert. While we will have many opportunities to be seen in the CT and on their website during 2021 (through sponsorship arrangements), this particular initiative was very successful.

Communications Officer
January 2020 saw the start of the work of Joe Priestley as MC's Communications Officer. Joe has fitted in very smoothly to MC, and his skills with a wide range of media has been extremely helpful throughout this strange year. He has played a major role in the design of our insert into the CT, and the re-launch event for MB.

Living in Love and Faith
During the second half of 2020 I also arranged for a number of people to be prepared to comment, on the MC website, on the 'Living in Love and Faith' documents when they eventually came out on November 2020. As the documents were published MC was able to field a wide range of significant people to comment, and this also created a great deal of traffic to our website and comment on the pieces. These are now grouped together on the MC website as a 'Resources' section and continue to be accessed by large numbers of people from all over the world.

Other Organisations
We have made some slightly more 'formal' arrangements to cooperate with organisations we already do some work with: Inclusive Church (of which I am a Trustee on behalf of MC), One Body One Faith, Open Table, SCM, PCN. These organisations have together issued a Partnership Statement (it can be found on the MC website). We have also become a partner with a new organisation called MoSAIC, working towards a more inclusive church (there was an article about it in the CT 26/2/21). At this point both groupings are 'talking' more than 'doing' anything, though our main grouping of Partners are looking to offer a range of resources for theological education which is a prime area for MC.

Each of these activities has, of course, a wide range of 'sub-activities' within them: meetings, emails, telephone calls, papers to write, and, even occasionally, time and space to think. In all of that I am grateful to Alan Race for his gentle and encouraging supervision of my work, and for the support and encouragement of the Trustees. I am also grateful that the Trustees felt able to renew my contract for a further two years in

September 2020, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Trustees to spread the word about MC far and wide.

Jonathan Draper, General Secretary

Modern Believing

Review of Policy Changes
In my last report I mentioned the changes in editorial policy agreed by the Trustees, after consultation with the Editorial Board and the Editorial Team. 2020 is the first year of their operation, so it is time to review them. The changes were

i. to cease to rely on uncommissioned, peer-reviewed articles for the non-conference editions;
ii. to invite articles from established scholars in accordance with themes for each edition, decided by the Editor; and
iii. to provide a sharper focus for the journal, based on the need a) to update our readers with developments in the different branches of Theology, and b) to provide a progressive alternative to 'theology-lite' conservative assumptions and positions.

Review of i). At the start of the year, there were an insufficient number of available articles to publish. With the full co-operation of Elaine Graham (Chair of the 2019 conference, 'Theology in the Public Square', and guest editor of the conference edition (61.1)), I resolved the problem by running a second conference edition (61.2), and increasing the maximum word length of each article from 3,500 to 4,500 words. Even so, 61.1 ran with only 3 articles. 61.2, 'Theology in the Public Square (2)' also had 3 articles, increased to 4 by a late unsolicited essay, which, given the absence of time, was peer reviewed and accepted by me.

I received 9 unsolicited articles for possible inclusion in 2020 (and 2 or 3 frivolous ones), including the deeply personal essay on the Clergy Disciplinary Measure, by Josephine Stein. This article brought the number of articles up to 4 in 61.2, and was widely read (and also circulated independently). Three were published in 61.3; one was rejected; two are currently being reviewed; two are 'reserves'; one may be published in 2021. The difficulty of filling the journal with quality contributions at the start of the year fully justifies the policy change to commissioning articles. However, it is essential that conference speakers agree in advance to the likely inclusion of a version of their talks in the conference edition.

Review of ii). The new policy applied only to 61.4, 'Biblical Interpretation'. The issue was led by a strong article from John Barton, and contained an essay by an emerging theologian (Robert Brown). But the issue was weakened by the withdrawal, at a late stage, of Yvonne Sherwood, due to covid-19, so the promised article, 'Feminist Interpretation of the Bible' was lost, thereby reducing the focus and impact of the edition. However, 61.4

sets in train an unbroken series of focused editions, at least until the end of 2023, and I continue to be thankful for the willingness of well-known theologians to agree to write for us.

It is too early to review iii) except to say that a sharper focus will be achieved by the specific themes chosen for future editions.

Redesign
Work began in 2019 on the redesign of the journal. Richard Remington provided the templates, and incorporated feedback into several revisions, leading to the use of the agreed format in the publication of 61.4. I'm grateful to Jonathan Draper for his liaison with Richard and personnel at Liverpool University Press (LUP). The hard copy of 61.4 has enabled a more thorough assessment of the impact of the new design. Several comments, all of them minor but cumulatively significant, have been made and agreed (and will be operational from 62.2 onwards). I thank Michael Brierley in particular for suggesting improvements.

Relaunch
It has been necessary, due to covid-19, to postpone (twice) and then cancel the physical event scheduled to take place at St. James Piccadilly. Members will have had opportunity to take part in the online launch which took place on 28th Jan. 2021.

Readership
The steep decline in membership of Modern Church is reflected in the number of print copies produced:-

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Membership	368	362	330	326	252
Institutions	77	79	73	71	76

A membership drive is clearly necessary. There were 17 new full members, responding to the Church Times insert in October 2020 (and more have joined since).

However the online readership is more encouraging. ATLA (American Theological Libraries Association) reports the number of viewing and downloads is steadily increasing. As an example, here are the download statistics (of articles and/or abstracts), for the same month (May), for 5 years:

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 Jan - May

Totals	181	165	154	121	158	326	180

The Head of Statistics at ATLA reported:

> As far as comparable usage, I can tell you that Modern Believing's usage is well ahead of average. Last fiscal year, you received 0.29% of the total usage of the database (which was 22,519 hits out of a total 3,910,233). My own personal bar is that a journal is doing very well if it receives 0.10% or more, and you are nearly three times that. From a comparative perspective, Modern Believing is receiving extremely significant usage. It's even more impressive when one considers that many of the top-performing journals are in the field of Biblical Studies, as they draw heavy use not only from scholars but also from clergy in sermon preparation.

The latest figures (2019) from LUP show there were 958 downloads from the LUP website in 2019 compared with 766 in 2018 (25% increase). Readership from the USA, and on the LUP platform, is equivalent to UK readership – 33% in each case. There has also been a 100% increase in the number of clicks from the Kudos platform to Modern Believing articles on the LUP platform (in 2019).

Postal Delivery
There is a preparation schedule which I agree annually with LUP. The schedule guarantees delivery of the journal, by the 5th of the month, provided copy is presented 11-12 weeks previously (e.g., in order to secure of the July edition by July 5th, copy must be received by LUP on or before 15th March). I submit copy for all the articles, editorial, and cover data: Michael Brierley submits copy for the reviews. We have submitted copy for each edition well within our deadlines. There have been delays (which continue) in the print distribution, but these are probably due to reduced staffing during the pandemic (including postal staff at Liverpool), so I have not queried late arrivals.

I thank Michael Brierley for his 11th year as Reviews Editor; the Trustees, Team and Board for their enthusiasm, advice and support; the authors who have shared their wisdom; and the team at Liverpool University Press for their professionalism and courtesy.

Adrian Thatcher, Editor Modern Believing

Communications Officer Report

During 2020, Modern Church's communications have adapted well to changing conditions. Excellent foundations were laid with the arrival of the new website in April, which has grown throughout 2020 with nearly

50,000 views in 2020. We are fast approaching 2,000 followers on Twitter, 1,000 followers on Facebook and 100 subscribers to the blog.

Much of this success has been built on the work of my predecessors, though I have taken a markedly different approach to communications, mostly in response to the tumultuous and fast-changing news agenda. Instead of scheduling tweets ahead of time, I have been focusing on ensuring Modern Church is able to respond quickly to items such as the Church of England Evangelical Council's film, the so-called "Beautiful Story", the Black Lives Matter protests and much besides.

This work is complemented by our excellent team of regular bloggers and occasional blog authors, who are building a vibrant online presence, and those involved in redesigning and relaunching Modern Church's excellent print resources. We have also seen a steady stream of Affiliates joining the cause since the publication of the Church Times insert, which has been most pleasing.

Thank you for continuing to invest in me, for the excellent support received across the board and for helping me to find a home in liberal theology.

Joe Priestley, Communication Officer

Membership Report

2020 was the seventh full year for which the subscriptions to Modern Church were managed by Liverpool University Press (LUP) and operating on a calendar year subscription. The management of membership has now been taken in house with LUP. The numbers of subscribers for the three year previous period were as follows:

Subscription Type	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**Note**
Individual Member	275	218	199	1
Joint Members	21	21	16	2
Life Members	9	8	8	
Honorary Members	0	0	0	
Total Members	**325**	**252**	**223**	

Notes

1. Of which 72 paid the concessionary rate (69 in 2019).
2. Of which 8 paid the concessionary rate (9 in 2019).

Diane Kutar, Administrator

Signs of the Times Report

In 2020, in the midst of a pandemic which has proved a supreme “sign of the times”, our quarterly newsletter continued to develop in its design, and to give a voice to our membership and others.

A sad highlight of the year for Modern Church was the loss of our most valued Treasurer, David Simon. In the first edition of 2020 he wrote movingly about “losing loved ones before their time”, an article which proved all too prophetic when he himself died (not from Covid) in the late summer. Our final edition celebrated his life and his contribution to Modern Church.

Other highlights included a contribution on theology/spirituality and autism from a new, young voice, Erin Burnett from Northern Ireland, who is herself autistic and from whom I hope we will be hearing more. Then, over the course of the year, we had contributions from a project at Bramhall Methodist Church in Greater Manchester on Science and the Language of Faith; an article by Paul Brett on a similar theme; one from Alan Race on another “sign of the times”, the fall of the Colston statue in Bristol in response to the resurgence of Black Lives Matter; and a provocative one on what the Church can learn from Extinction Rebellion in terms of its governance and modes of action.

Along with our website, Signs has become in a real sense our principal “shop window”, and is available not only to members but to the new category of Affiliates, and distributed to those interested at such other events as we have been involved in during the year. If any members would like extra copies to distribute to enquirers in their own church or neighbourhood, or at events which they attend, they should request these from Diane Kutar (office@modernchurch.org.uk) and she will try to accommodate them.

A corollary of the new design is that there is now, even at an increased size of 20 pages (but reduced format), somewhat less space to fill with text, though we have more recently been able to increase this somewhat. That means that the editorial team can be more selective in considering contributions – though members’ offerings are emphatically still welcome and we will do our best to make use of them as soon as space allows. There has, in fact, been an increasing flow of high-quality contributions from a number of sources.

The management of book reviews remains in the capable hands of Trevor Pitt. Trevor is always looking for books to review and people to review them, and your suggestions will always be appreciated. Thanks are due to

him, and to the other members of the editorial team – our General Secretary, our Communications Officer, and Lorraine Cavanagh and Helen Burnett – and to our designer Richard Remington; but above all to our contributors.

Anthony Woollard, Editor, Signs of the Times

Treasurer's Report

Sadly during the course of 2020 our much loved Treasurer, David Simon, died of cancer. During his time as Treasurer, where his expertise in accountancy was greatly appreciated by the Trustees, he also found time to be the Secretary of the 2019 annual conference. His steady presence is much missed.

As I had been Treasurer only a couple of years before David took on the role, it fell to me to stand in and pick up the reins again and I hope you will forgive any errors and omissions in the way these accounts have been presented. I am however, reassured that they have been looked over closely not only by my fellow Trustees, but also by our valued Independent Examiner Jonathan Rudge.

This has been a strange year from many points of view and activity for 2020 was much less than in 2019 as you can see from comparing the accounts for these two years. There is an operating deficit of £36,217 on the year, of which about £31k is on legacy projects. We have taken out a total of £40k from our investments in two tranches in order to maintain our planned spending.

Greenbelt
The invoice from Greenbelt for £6,600 owing from 2019 was only sent and settled at the end of January 2020.

Signs of the Times
Signs of the Times has come in on the amount agreed for the revised budget. However, this is an expensive production currently being sent out to all our members and affiliates and is part of our Legacy Project of outreach work – of which more later.

Modern Believing
It was agreed that Adrian Thatcher, a Trustee, should be paid £2,500 p.a. as Editor. Adrian has requested that this be paid in two tranches one in October and the other in March – hence in this financial year, there is only one payment to him. There are some small expenses in addition.

Liverpool University Press are now not only publishing MB but also managing our membership list which was previously subcontracted to Turpin. In an effort to move beyond a large backlog of books awaiting review, over £1k was for postage costs relating to book reviews.

Subscriptions and Membership

The subscription income (and membership numbers) remains considerably down following the handover from Turpin to LUP. LUP did an enormous amount of work to follow up lapsed members, most ably supported by Council member David James, but while we had some positive responses, it seems that a considerable number of members decided not to renew. Partly as a result of this it was decided that another part of the Legacy Project should be to publish a 4-page insert in the Church Times in the autumn. Following this we gained a number of new members as well as some new affiliate members. Our General Secretary took on responsibility for sending out joining packs and it is hoped that some of these affiliates at least will become full members in due course.

Conference

High Leigh conference centre has treated us very well over the enforced cancellation of the 2020 annual conference due to Covid-19 and initially agreed to transfer our deposit to 2021. This deposit will be held over for another year for the 2022 conference.

Legacy

This financial year we have spent approximately £27,500 (somewhat less than the £60k which David Simon had anticipated) on legacy projects if we include the spending on SOTT and the relaunch of MB. This leaves over £125k of the legacy for the projects for which it has been earmarked. For 2021 these include the continuing funding of the paid General Secretary (£20k) and the relaunch of MB, while the work on the relaunch of the website under Joe’s auspices also requires further work. Already we have entered into a sponsorship for conference projects with the Church Times which it is hoped will further raise our profile.

Future Treasurer

We are currently recruiting for a new Administrator to replace Diane Kutar who will be leaving us at the end of May and it has been decided to include a bookkeeping role in that post to carry forward the day to day work, currently done by the Treasurer. We will however, continue to have a Treasurer as a member of the Board of Trustees, who will supervise the new Administrator with regard to financial management and bookkeeping.

Rosalind Lund, Acting Treasurer

Receipts and Payment Accounts to 31 Dec 2020

		Notes	2020 £	2020 £	2019 £	2019 £
RECEIPTS						
Subscriptions (inc affiliates)			11,234	11,234	9,665	9,665
Gift Aid						
Investment Income			15,061	15,061	15,643	15,643
Conferences	Annual Conference	1	2,949		13,991	
	Council Residential		1,354		882	
	Other		0	4,303	0	14,873
Miscellaneous	Donations	2	125		638	
	Publications (MB royalties)	3	1,113		1,274	
	Other		0	1,238	0	1,912
TOTAL RECEIPTS				**31,836**		**42,093**
PAYMENTS			**2020**	**2020**	**2019**	**2019**
Legacy Project	Gen Sec		17,500		17,500	
	Greenbelt (due from 2019)	4	6,598		7,556	
	Projects (CT insert; MB relaunch)	5	6,352			
	Gen Sec Travel Expenses		846	31,296	2,153	27,209
Publications	Modern Believing		6,374		4,272	
	SOTT (Legacy project)	6	5,825		4,053	
	Editors		1,267		3,500	
	Other pubs		0		0	
				13,466		11,825
Communications	Comms Officer		6,985		6,680	
	Website costs & advertising		1,613		2,508	
					1,638	
				8,598	0	10,826
Admin	Administrator		7,296		7,710	
	Accounting fees		430			
	Trustees room hire		210		190	
	Admin Expenses (inc post re new Affiliates and insurance)		2,073		4,490	
	Other (Data Protection)		35	10,043		12,390
Conferences	Annual Conference	1	2,950		15,772	
	Council Residential		1,700		2,845	
				4,650	270	18,887

TOTAL PAYMENTS	**68,053**	**81,137**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT - CASH FLOW	**-36,217**	**-39,044**

Notes

1 Conference 2020 was cancelled - some people who had paid deposits or full fees chose to have them transferred to set against the 2021 conference; others to make a donation to MC's general funds. High Leigh agreed to transfer the deposit paid for accommodation in 2019 to 2021 and a further roll-over has been agreed to take us to 2022.

2 Donations - at the end of 2019 and again at the start of 2020 two large payments were received from an unknown donor. Investigation revealed that these had been made in error and they were duly refunded in May to the tune of £1649. However, as a result of the cancelled conference for 2020 (for which payments were made in 2019 and 2020) a total of £1,006 was most generously donated. Restricted donations for student bursaries at the annual conference are treated separately.

3 Modern Church receives payments from LUP in relation to subscriptions from libraries and institutions, referred to as royalties (in previous annual accounts included under subscriptions).

4 Greenbelt was cancelled in 2020, but MC had already decided to focus on other projects for this year. The payment here relates to a late invoice received for 2019.

5 Legacy projects - in addition to the expenses relating to the work of the General Secretary, limited in 2020 by Covid-19, but which did include attendance at the Bloxham Festival of Faith and Literature, MC invested in an insert in the Church Times in October, a redesign of Modern Believing (under a new Editor) and a re-launch of the journal (postponed to 2021 and held on-line). The CT insert led to a significant increase in membership and Affiliate enquiries and some additional posting and printing costs relating to MB and SOTT.

6 Signs of the Times (SOTT) also had a re-design in 2019 which was fully rolled out in 2020. This members' newsletter is now published and distributed independently of LUP, hence the decision to list it as a separate item under Publications. The costs of this should be considered as part of our Legacy Project.

7 Investments (CCLA shares) - 2020 has proved to be a volatile year with the value of our shares going down and up. We have withdrawn a total of £40,000 in value during the course of the year to pay for our Legacy projects as budgeted.

Balance Sheet 2020
FUNDS STATEMENT

Members Funds		**2020**	**2020**	**2019**	**2019**
		£	**£**	**£**	**£**
Opening balances					
Undesignated		110,908		38,833	
Designated	Reserves	263,429		263,429	
	Legacy Projects	163,247		190,722	
Restricted	Student bursary fund	451	538,035	871	493,855
Surplus/deficit Cash Flow		-36,217		-39,044	
Unrealised holdings gains/losses		33,047	-3,170	83,244	44,180
Closing Funds			**534,865**		**538,035**
Represented by					
Undesignated		145,731		110,908	
Designated	Reserves	263,429		263,429	
	Legacy Projects	124,929		163,247	
Restricted	Student bursary fund	776		451	
Total Funds			**534,865**		**538,035**
Members' Assets					
CAF Bank current account		28,086		22,981	
PayPal		135		1,324	
CCLA Investment Account		1,330	29,551	1,461	25,766
CBF Year End Valuation			505,314		512,269
Total Assets			**534,865**		**538,035**

NOTES TO THE BALANCE SHEET

Legacy Projects			
Legacy funds brought forward		163,247	190,722
Legacies received		0	0
Legacy expended during year		-38,318	27,475
Legacy funds remaining at year end		124,929	163,247
Student Bursary Funds (Annual conference)			
Funds brought forward		451	871
Donations received		325	165
Grants awarded (none - no conference in 2020)		0	-585
Grant Funds remaining at year end		776	451
Annual Conference accounts (accruals basis)	1		
Conference fees received		5,639	14,145
Conference costs (inc repaid conf fees)		-4,130	-16,742
Deficit (-)/surplus		1,509	-2,597
Note re fees received for cancelled 2020 conference			
Repaid conference fees		2,295	
Donations (converted from deposits and full fees)		1,006	
Rollover to 2021/2022		1,538	
Unresolved at 31/12/2020		800	
		5,639	

Payment to Trustee

A payment of £2,500 was authorised by the Trustees to Prof Adrian Thatcher for his work as editor of Modern Believing,
of which £1,250 was paid in 2020, and the remainder is due in March 2021)

Unrealised holdings gains/losses (includes £40,000 withdrawn during the course of 2020 as part of the Legacy project)

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The Modern Church
For the year ended 31st December 2020
Registered Charity no. 281573

Independent examiner's statement

I report on the accounts of the Modern Church ("theTrust") for the year ended 31 December 2020, which are set out on the attached pages and show a cash deficit of £36,217, together with funds totalling £534,867

Responsibilities and basis of report

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I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

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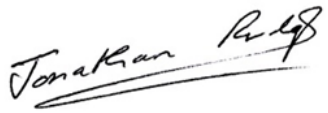

Jonathan H. Rudge MA FCA
20 Blackthorne Close
Solihull B91 1PF
30th April 2021

Modern Church Officers and Post-holders: 2020

President Professor Elaine Graham

Chair of Council Canon Alan Race

Vice Chair of Council Mr Anthony Woollard

General Secretary The Very Rev'd Dr Jonathan Draper

Secretary Rev Dr Jan van der Lely

Treasurer Rev David Simon (until June 2020)
Acting Treasurer Mrs Rosalind Lund (from June 2020)

Vice Presidents:

Prof Paul Badham
Prof Elaine Graham
Rev Dr Nicholas Henderson
Dr Peter Mills
The Most Rev Barry Morgan
The Very Rev Prof Martyn Percy
The Rt Rev Dr John Saxbee
The Rt Rev Brian Smith
The Rt Revd Tim Stevens
Rev Canon Richard Truss
The Rt Rev Martin Wharton
Rev Jonathan Clatworthy

Council Members during 2020

Rev Dr Jeyan Anketell
Mrs Jean Barnett[1]
Dr Charlie Bell
Mrs Pat Boyd[2]
Rev Dr Lorraine Cavanagh[1]
Rev Jonathan Clatworthy
Rev Canon David Driscoll
Rev Ruth Fitter
Rev David Howard[1]
Rev David James[1]
Rev Tom Keates[2]
Rev Tim Laundon
Mrs Rosalind Lund[1]
Rev Stephen Parsons
Canon Trevor Pitt[2]
Canon Dr Alan Race[2]
Rev David Simon (until August 2020 - deceased)
David Storey[1]
Prof. Adrian Thatcher[1]
Rev Dr Miranda Threlfall Holmes[1]
Rev Dr Jan van der Lely
Kenneth Wilkinson Roberts[1]
Mr Anthony Woollard[1]

[1] Term of office ends at the 2021 AGM but can stand for re-election
[2] Council members whose term expired in 2020 and their term was extended by one year due to the pandemic.

In bold – current trustees

Modern Church

Receipts and Payment Accounts to 31 Dec 2020

		Notes	2020	2020	2019	2019
			£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS						
Subscriptions (inc affiliates)			11,234	11,234	9,665	9,665
Gift Aid						
Investment Income			15,061	15,061	15,643	15,643
Conferences	Annual Conference	1	2,949		13,991	
	Council Residential		1,354		882	
	Other		0	4,303	0	14,873
Miscellaneous	Donations	2	125		638	
	Publications (MB royalties)	3	1,113		1,274	
	Other		0	1,238	0	1,912
TOTAL RECEIPTS				**31,836**		**42,093**

PAYMENTS			2020	2020	2019	2019
Legacy Project	Gen Sec		17,500		17,500	
	Greenbelt (due from 2019)	4	6,598		7,556	
	Projects (CT insert; MB relaunch)	5	6,352			
	Gen Sec Travel Expenses		846	31,296	2,153	27,209

Publications	Modern Believing		6,374		4,272	
	SOTT (Legacy project)	6	5,825		4,053	
	Editors		1,267		3,500	
	Other pubs		0		0	
				13,466		11,825
Communications	Comms Officer		6,985		6,680	
	Website costs & advertising		1,613		2,508	
					1,638	
				8,598	0	10,826
Admin	Administrator		7,296		7,710	
	Accounting fees		430			
	Trustees room hire		210		190	
	Admin Expenses (inc post re new Affiliates and insurance)		2,073		4,490	
	Other (Data Protection)		35	10,043		12,390
Conferences	Annual Conference	1	2,950		15,772	
	Council Residential		1,700		2,845	
				4,650	270	18,887
TOTAL PAYMENTS				**68,053**		**81,137**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT - CASH FLOW				**-36,217**		**-39,044**

Notes

1 Conference 2020 was cancelled - some people who had paid deposits or full fees chose to have them transferred to set against the 2021 conference; others to make a donation to MC's general funds. High Leigh agreed to transfer the deposit paid for accommodation in 2019 to 2021 and a further roll-over has been agreed to take us to 2022.

2 Donations - at the end of 2019 and again at the start of 2020 two large payments were received from an unknown donor. Investigation revealed that these had been made in error and they were duly refunded in May to the tune of £1649. However, as a result of the cancelled conference for 2020 (for which payments were made in 2019 and 2020) a total of £1,006 was most generously donated. Restricted donations for student bursaries at the annual conference are shown relative to the conference for which they were given and are shown separately under Funds.

3 Modern Church receives payments from LUP in relation to subscriptions from libraries and institutions, referred to as royalties (in previous annual accounts included under subscriptions)

4 Greenbelt was cancelled in 2020, but MC had already decided to focus on other projects for this year. The payment here relates to a late invoice received from Greenbelt for 2019.

5 Legacy projects - In addition to the expenses relating to the work of the General Secretary, limited in 2020 by Covid-19, but which did include attendance at the Bloxham Festival of Faith and Liberature, MC invested in an insert in the Church Times in October, a redesign of Modern Believing (under a new Editor) and a re-launch (postponed to 2021 and held on-line). The CT insert led to a significant increase in membership and Affiliate enquiries and some additional posting and printing costs relating to MB and SOTT.

6 Signs of the Times (SOTT) also had a re-design in 2019 which was fully rolled out in 2020. This members' newsletter is now published and distributed independently of LUP, hence the decision to list it as a separate item under Publications. The costs of this should be considered as part of our Legacy Project.

7 Investments (CCLA shares) - 2020 has proved to be a volatile year with the value of our shares going down and up. We have withdrawn a total of £40,000 in value during the course of the year to pay for our Legacy projects as budgeted. See Funds unrealised holdings gains/losses.

MODERN CHURCH ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2020

FUNDS STATEMENT

Members Funds		Note	**2020**	**2020**	**2019**	**2019**
			£	**£**	**£**	**£**
Opening balances						
Undesignated			110,908		38,833	
Designated	Reserves		263,429		263,429	
	Legacy Projects	5	163,247		190,722	
Restricted	Student bursary fund		451	538,035	871	493,855
Surplus/deficit Cash Flow			-36,217		-39,044	
Unrealised holdings gains/losses		7	33,047	-3,170	83,244	44,180
Closing Funds				**534,865**		**538,035**
Represented by						
Undesignated			145,701		110,908	
Designated	Reserves		263,429		263,429	
	Legacy Projects	5	124,929		163,247	
Restricted	Student bursary fund	2	806		451	
Total Funds				**534,865**		**538,035**
Members' Assets						
CAF Bank current account			28,086		22,981	
PayPal			135		1,324	
CCLA Investment Account			1,330	29,551	1,461	25,766
CBF Year End Valuation		7		505,314		512,269

Total Assets			**534,865**	**538,035**

NOTES

Legacy Projects	5, 6		
Legacy funds brought forward		163,247	190,722
Legacies received		0	0
Legacy expended during year		-38,318	27,475
Legacy funds remaining at year end		124,929	163,247
Student Bursary Funds (Annual conferenc	2		
Funds brought forward		451	871
Donations received		355	165
Grants awarded (none - no conference in 2020)		0	-585
Grant Funds remaining at year end		806	451
Annual Conference accounts (accruals ba	1		
Conference centre deposit		-2,247	
Conference fees received		5,639	14,145
Conference costs (inc repaid conf fees)		-4,130	-16,742
Deficit (-)/surplus		-738	-2,597
Note re fees received for cancelled 2020 conference			
Repaid conference fees		2,295	
Donations (converted from deposits and full fees)		1,006	
Rollover to 2021/2022		1,538	
Unresolved at 31/12/2020		800	
			5,639

Payment to Trustee

A payment of £2,500 was authorised by the Trustees to Prof Adrian Thatcher for his work as editor of Modern Believing, of which £1,250 was paid in 2020, and the remainder is due in March 2021)

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The Modern Church
For the year ended 31st December 2020
Registered Charity no. 281573

Independent examiner's statement

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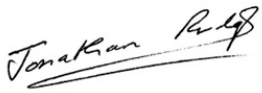

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