



## Annual (Trustees) Report Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered no. 1184714.

The Centre's fourth official year began in October 2022 through to September 2023 and it's been an exciting and challenging year.

### David Shutt Young Peace Ambassadors

A highlight, and possibly the most exciting development in the Centre's work this year, was the David Shutt Young Peace Ambassadors pilot project. We are very grateful to Mark Sharp, Headteacher at [Cross Lane Primary School](#), for his immediate enthusiasm for Peace Ambassadors in his own school and for sharing it with the Headteachers at [St Patrick's](#) and [Old Earth schools](#) in the autumn term.

In the winter term we introduced the concept of Peace Ambassadors to the whole staff team in each school and again it was received enthusiastically. Theatre artist, Alys Williams, with fellow actor Katie Coen, created and delivered a special launch assembly in each of the three schools in March and April. The children (and staff) became astronauts and aliens, and boarded their spaceships to fly to Space Club, where they became embroiled in an argument. Everyone got involved, shouting support for their side and against the other side. Sound familiar! Once their space crafts had returned to school the children thought about what had happened, sharing ideas about how the argument could be solved. At this point Alys and Katie stepped back and Jo introduced Peace Ambassadors and invited the children from years 4 and 5 to apply.

This led to [32 children and 6 staff](#) coming to the Blackley Centre for two fun filled days in June to train to be Peace Ambassadors. They were all brilliant, learning and practising the GLIDE process of transforming conflict. After the summer, everyone met up for a refresher day, leaving excited and confident about being Peace Ambassadors in their schools, supported by their teachers. Finally, the children and their families were invited to the Centre Celebration for their commissioning as Peace Ambassadors, which included Alys enabling us all to visit Space Club one more time which was great fun!



All this was only possible because of the gifts and grants made in memory of David Shutt, supplemented by grants of £2500 from the Edith Maud Ellis Trust (July 2022) and £3000 from the Southall Trust. To build on the pilot, three grant applications were made during the year and the West Yorkshire Mayor's Fund made a grant of £8000 enabling Peace Ambassadors to continue and expand into three more schools next year.

The Young Peace Ambassadors Project is exciting, and much needed in our increasingly divided world. It has huge potential and we thank everyone who has been involved so far!

## Inter Faith Work

This year the Centre's Inter Faith work included

- hosting the 'Dignity of Women' Exhibition
- delivering a primary school assembly on Christianity
- hosting Calderdale Interfaith Women's Peace & Quiet Day
- leading 'Listening as Leaders' workshop at Calderdale Interfaith's 'Women in Leadership' Conference
- showcasing Blackley at the Inter Faith Network's Regional meeting
- hosting a Hindu funeral.



Andy continued his [national inter faith role as Moderator of the Baptist Inter Faith Working Group](#), but after consultation with Centre Trustees, concluded this role in June to focus on local inter faith work and give more support to the Centre's peace work.

## Training Work

For the first half of this year Jo continued to work as the lead trainer for [Smile Mediation](#), delivering Mediation Skills Training to Centrica [British Gas]; BTech modules on managing conflict for Resolve (through Smile Mediation) as well as contributing to Resolve's ASB Apprenticeship training particularly through Gilmore Fraleigh Style Profiling work. An exciting project was working with Barbara Macnish to devise, write and deliver Restorative Awareness for Fans Training for the English Football League: a programme for fans who have been involved in anti-social behaviour or hate related incidents at football grounds as an alternative to banning from matches. [24 participants were trained to deliver this programme for 8 different clubs.](#)

By March 2023 Smile had moved into a different model of management becoming part of the Resolve family, and Karen Ainsworth finished as Manager of Smile. This has led to a reduction in work with Smile for Jo, as other trainers are now on board, and in September 2023 Jo delivered a final Mediation Skills Training for Smile. Jo is hugely grateful for all the opportunities that Smile Mediation has given to her over 23 years as the place where she honed her craft as both a mediator and a trainer. It is a matter of personal sadness that this has now come to an end, as well as a concern for the Centre as Smile Mediation was a main customer of the Centre, bringing in essential funds. It does however create time for new training to be devised and delivered from and for the Centre, but that will take time to come into force, creating a shortfall in income.

This year has also seen the decline in commissioned training from the Colleges. Due to staff changes and their own financial constraints Spurgeon's College, Bristol Baptist College, St Hilds and URC EM2 Programmes are now covering this aspect of ministerial formation as part of their in-house provision. In addition, The Partnership of Theological Education at Luther King House has appointed a member of staff with experience and training with Place for Hope and the BA Level 6 module that Jo has delivered for over 10 years is now delivered in-house. This is a concern financially for the Centre, but also it decreases the contacts that The Blackley Centre has now with ministers in training and could well have an impact on other aspects of the work.

More encouragingly Jo has delivered several [commissioned training days for the Dioceses of Peterborough and Sheffield](#), working with Curates, Training Incumbents, and Missional leaders on Gilmore Fraleigh Style Work; Coping with Anxiety in Church Leadership; Transforming Conflict and Handling Change. She has also led training days for individual Baptist Churches and continues to offer conflict coaching to individual ministers. She has been exploring with the YBA and the Baptist Union of Great Britain opportunities for CMD training in these areas.

[In all, approximately 200 people have experienced training coming from \(or in partnership with\) the Blackley Centre.](#)

## Interpersonal Mediations and Group Facilitations.

Over the course of the year the Centre has offered Interpersonal Mediations/Group Facilitations to couples, individuals, and to larger groups. Some of these were one-off meetings, others have taken several months of careful and committed working to improve relationships. In the interest of respecting and honouring confidentiality it is not possible to give details of to whom or even where these have been offered, but in summary this has involved couples with marital tensions, individuals within churches struggling with relationships, as well as clergy teams, for Baptist, URC and Anglican churches, cathedrals, colleges and dioceses - and a prison. It takes a lot of courage for people to engage in this work, and Jo is very grateful for the trust that these individuals have placed in her and in the Centre. We are also hugely indebted to colleagues Aglaia Barraclough, Liz Griffiths, Barbara Macnish and Colin Moulds who have worked with the Centre on several of these cases. [In all, around 75 people have received mediation/facilitation from The Blackley Centre.](#)

## Funding and Management

The Centre is funded by charging for some aspects of the work, the giving of its members, fees for the use of the buildings by other organisations and by grant funding.

Financially this has been a more challenging year than is reflected in our accounts.

We are very grateful to the Yorkshire Baptist Association for providing seed funding for the Centre from 2017, but quite properly, this came to an end in June 2023. The trustees sought to ensure financial stability and development with a major funding application, but sadly this was declined. We are grateful for Lisa Jagger who continued to work with us for a day a month as our funding consultant, working with Andy to help us apply for further grants.

[However, had it not been for a wonderful gift of £10,000 and the West Yorkshire Mayor's Fund grant for Peace Ambassadors of £8000 being received in September to fund the project in 23/24, we would have run a significant deficit this financial year. As our new Treasurer said at the time, 'It's good for the optics!' It does, however, mask an underlying challenging financial situation for the Centre which the trustees are working to address.](#) Part of this is to encourage our supporters and friends to become members of the Centre and give monthly in support of the work and we are so grateful for all who do this.

The Centre is run on a day-to-day basis by the Directors, Revd Andy Williams and Revd Joanna Williams (one full time equivalent), assisted by the Centre Manager, Christine Allcock (voluntary) who oversees all use of the centre and manages bookings by external groups. There were 131 such bookings this year, an increase of 50% on last year and we thank Chris for all her work, especially for her care in facilitating part of a Hindu funeral. Church volunteer catering teams provided meals and refreshments for a number of groups and we thank them for their great work in providing hospitality. We continue to be grateful to Pauline Barnard for being our bookkeeping volunteer, banking our cash and cheques and other duties. Towards the end of the year a great gift came to the Centre and Church in the shape of the Revd Nikki Jenkins, formerly minister of Hope Baptist Church, who is half-time minister with both Centre and Church until October 2024 as a gift funded by Hope Baptist Church.

Andy and Jo have been taking a delayed sabbatical, which started with the month of August in 2022 and was followed this year with taking July and August. It was a much-needed rich time to rest, retreat, read, reflect, recreate and visit people and places. These included the Northumbria and Iona communities, St Buenos, Dunblane and the Greenbelt Festival. Through these and other experiences they developed a rhythm of work and rest and spiritual journey with God that will hopefully sustain them for the journey ahead. Andy and Jo thank the Centre Trustees and church for making this wonderful time possible.

## Trustees

The Centre is overseen by our trustees and we thank them for their hard work. At the beginning of the year, we had 5 elected trustees in Samina Ali, Hugh Donald, Richard Kidd (Treasurer), Mary Taylor (Chair) and Paul Weller,

as well as Pam Smith and Andrew Taylor, our 2 trustees nominated by Blackley Baptist Church, the founding body, making a team of seven. The trustees met both by Zoom, on site and with hybrid meetings four times during the year, supported by our Minute Secretary, Desley Taylor.

This year saw unexpected changes in our Trustee body as our Treasurer, Richard Kidd, became ill and gave notice that he would need to stand down. After notifying this at the last AGM in March 2023, we were delighted that Centre member, [Rob Quarton](#), stepped forward and offered to become Treasurer and was co-opted by the trustees. [Paul Weller](#) moved to Germany and whilst he will still spend significant time in the UK, he felt that it made sense to conclude his time as trustee. At the AGM we thanked Paul for his friendship and broad insights as a trustee, particularly on inter faith matters, which have been so valuable to us and wish him well for the future. We were delighted to elect [Karen Ainsworth](#) to the Trustees at the AGM and are benefitting from her wealth of experience as a mediator and a retired CEO of a small charity. Then whilst we were still in the process of transferring responsibilities between Richard and Rob, very sadly Richard died.



### Rev Dr Richard Kidd



Richard had a heart attack whilst in hospital and died in July 2023. This has been a huge loss not just to the Centre but to all the very many friends and colleagues of Richard, knowing him as a Baptist minister, Principal and Co-Principal of Northern Baptist College; radical theologian, poet, artist, and dear friend. He was a friend and supporter of the Centre from the very beginning, even when it was just an idea before Andy and Jo came to Blackley and he was delighted to support the Centre as a founding trustee and Treasurer, helping us gain charitable status in 2019. He was full of enthusiasm for the work of peace, reconciliation, justice and inter faith and designed our logo and banner overseeing the production of our initial publicity and original website. Through the years Richard has given so much to us (we are still discovering just how much!) and his artwork adorns the walls. He was a great friend, and we miss him so very much.

We give our grateful thanks to God for Richard and will endeavour to keep 'the flame alive!'

During the year, we have networked for the first time with Elland Children's Centre, the Colt Project in Elland and the Peace Studies Department at the University of Bradford. We continue to work closely with Bridge Builders Ministries, Calderdale Interfaith and other agencies and centres for reconciliation through Reconcilers Together, especially through their Community of Practice. We thank them for their companionship as we work to grow peace and reconciliation through dialogue.

Two years ago, at our Trustees 24 hour residential meeting, Richard helped us to create what is now The Blackley Prayer. It seems right that we end our Annual Report with it. We are grateful for all that has been achieved through the Centre in the year 2022 – 2023 and look forward to all that will be.

Rev Andy Williams  
Rev Joanna Williams

on behalf of The Trustees of The Blackley Centre.

