



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

The Centre's fifth official year began in October 2023 through to September 2024 and again it's been an exciting and challenging year.

David Shutt Young Peace Ambassadors

Our frontpage headline for its second year is again the [David Shutt Young Peace Ambassadors](#), enabling children in primary school to address and transform conflict among their peers. Through this project children and staff learn that shouting, and being aggressive, and fighting are not the only or ideal ways to deal with conflict, and that careful listening, summarising, identifying issues, problem solving and agreement making, provide a non-violent process of transforming conflict before it becomes destructive. YPAs invite peers to peace talks, creating opportunities to deal with conflict in this way. Thus potentially, all Year



5 and 6 pupils across all five schools are seeing that there are non-violent ways of resolving conflicts, and having the opportunity to use them. This behaviour is in turn being modelled to the school years below them and the schools are becoming more peaceful learning communities where the impact of destructive conflict is being reduced and transformed. We hope this approach to culture change in dealing with conflict will help to 'stop children, young people and adults becoming involved in violence, including knife crime now and in the future.'

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We are very grateful to the Headteachers and staff of the schools for making this possible. The three pilot schools of [Cross Lane Primary School](#), [St Patrick's](#) and [Old Earth](#) all participated again in this second year, joined by [Elland CofE](#) and [Bowling Green Academy](#).

We introduced the concept of Peace Ambassadors to the whole staff in both new schools and it was received enthusiastically. Theatre artist, Alys Williams, delivered the special launch Assembly with the children (and staff) becoming astronauts and aliens, boarding their space craft 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. Once their space craft had returned to school the children thought about what had happened, sharing ideas about how the argument could be solved. At this point Alys stepped back, and Jo introduced Young Peace Ambassadors, inviting children from Years 4 and 5 to apply. In the three pilot schools Jo led assemblies on YPAs drawing on the experiences of the existing YPAs and again invited the children from Years 4 and 5 to apply.

This led to [48 children and 9 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 and 90 came along! [We have now trained 80 children in Elland schools along with 14 key staff members, impacting 5 schools!](#)



YPA's
2024



All this was only possible because of a grant from the West Yorkshire Mayor's Fund of £7970 which didn't cover the full costs, so if you supported the Centre financially this year, you have supported Young Peace Ambassadors and we thank you. It is much needed in our increasingly divided world and it has huge potential.

Training

Jo has delivered [commissioned training days](#) for [Regents Park College Oxford](#); [Cardiff Baptist College](#); [Southern Counties Baptist Association](#) and the [Dioceses of Peterborough and Sheffield](#). These days/combination of days focus on how we manage ourselves in conflict situations, and how we can address anxiety in churches caused by difference and division and general education work around conflict in churches, improving the culture. She also delivered a final [Mediation Skills Training for Smile Mediation](#).

Partly due to cut-backs from other training providers such as Smile Mediation, it was felt that this was the time to create our very own mediation skills and restorative practice training. This resulted in the creation and delivery of the Blackley Centre's '[Paths of Peace – Handling Conflict Well](#)' training for ministers and church leaders. It is designed to help people within their own context, to handle conflict and disagreement well: learning processes and practices that promote restoration of relationship and reconciliation. We hope that this will be a significant resource for churches of all denominations, but primarily the Baptist denomination, to improve the culture in churches which seems increasingly fractured. As the year came to a close we had 8 people registered for our first course. [In all, approximately 200 people have experienced training coming from \(or in partnership with\) the Blackley Centre.](#)

Paths of Peace
Handling Conflict Well

What can you do when relationships become strained?
Do you want to help but are concerned about how,
anxious not to make things worse?

Learn, develop and enhance mediative peace-making skills that can be used both formally and informally in situations of conflict between individuals, in a church, community or work setting.

This exciting and innovative course uses mediative and restorative processes to help participants develop and enhance peacemaking skills to transform broken and strained relationships, in faith communities, families or workplace.

Central to any such process is careful, respectful listening which builds understanding, enabling those struggling with difference to find ways forward that bring life and reconciliation.

If you want to be equipped to make a difference using mediation skills and restorative practices, this is the course for you.

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Interpersonal Mediations and Group Facilitations.

Over the course of the year the Centre has offered several [Group Facilitations](#) to congregations. These occasionally involve a single meeting, but more often 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 these have mainly been [churches](#) struggling with relationships, and [leadership teams](#), for [Baptist](#), [URC](#) and [Anglican](#) churches, and whole congregations. One additional significant conversation was between [Jews and Muslims](#) living within the same city, exploring the [impact of the war in Gaza with Israel](#). This involved around 50 people across the city and the communities to listen deeply and carefully to one another. The CEO of the City Council who commissioned the conversation said it was exemplary and the best 'conversation' that she had ever participated in. Feedback from all Facilitations has been very positive, with people recognising the value and importance of the work.

In addition, Jo has conducted [1:1 Handling Conflict Coaching Sessions](#) with a variety of people, some connected with the group sessions above but others on unrelated issues. People have found these very helpful, especially when mediation or a restorative practice is not possible.

It takes a lot of courage for people to engage in this work, and we are very grateful for the trust that these individuals, communities, and churches, have placed in Jo and in the Centre. We are also hugely indebted to colleagues [Aglaia Barraclough](#), [Holly Bonfield](#) and [Carol-Anne Ryan Palmer](#) who have worked with the Centre on several of these cases. [In all, around 275 people have received mediation/facilitation from The Blackley Centre.](#)

Revd Nikki Jenkins

A major highlight of this year was that the [Revd Nikki Jenkins](#), formerly minister of Hope Baptist Church, joined us as a half-time associate minister with both the Centre and Church. Nikki came to us as a gift, funded by [Hope Baptist Church](#) and facilitated by the [Yorkshire Baptist Association](#) (YBA) and we are so grateful for her in many ways. She led on our [Peace and Quiet Days](#), drawing participants into deeper reflection through her 'Out of the Box' storytelling with sand and figures and in the ideas to develop our [Peace Garden](#). She also led us in a partnership event with the Church to host the [Project Violet Exhibition](#) on the experience of women in Baptist ministry for the churches of the YBA. She did an interfaith course on '[Multiple Belonging](#)' and supported our inter-faith work in Calderdale, Young Peace Ambassadors, the Centre's stall at the Baptist Assembly and our first Paths of Peace course. Nikki joined us for a final time for our Trustees meeting in October 2024 and shared her reflections on the year which were very helpful as we said a big thank you for all that she had contributed.

Inter Faith Work

The challenges of funding interfaith work have meant that this has been a smaller part of our work this year. However, due to the Hamas attack on Israel last October and the ensuing war in Gaza, we were asked to facilitate representatives of the faith communities in a city to have [dialogue about the impact of the conflict](#) on their interfaith relations here as mentioned earlier.

We were also saddened by the closure of the Interfaith Network UK, but delighted to be asked by [Calderdale Interfaith](#) to work in partnership with them and the Peace Studies Department of the University of Bradford to plan a [Peace Conference](#) to be hosted at the [Centre in Inter Faith Week 2024](#). Andy continued to support interfaith work in Calderdale as part of the [steering group of Calderdale Interfaith](#).



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. We're grateful to new members who joined the Centre during the year and all our existing members and to everyone who has given financially.

The trustees have worked hard with Andy and Jo to find a sustainable way forward for the Centre which has included the development of our Paths of Peace Mediation Skills Training, Mediations, Young Peace Ambassadors, interfaith work and encouraging membership of organisations, as well as individuals, and applying for grant funding. All this takes time to develop, and as we approached Summer 2024 the situation was very concerning. As an interim measure the Centre made an appeal for £20,000 in the summer of 2024. Also, with the help of our funding consultant, Lisa Jagger, an application was also made to the Community Fund of the [National Lottery](#) for core funding of £20,000 and in June we received the wonderful news that this had been successful.

Taking care of the finances through the year meant that our expenditure was reduced and together with the grant arriving in the last quarter, the end result was that, surprisingly, there was a significant surplus. We're very grateful for our partnership with [Blackley Baptist Church](#) and particularly for the support it gave by allowing us to suspend payments of our usual contributions and for the use of rooms for events. The challenge of sustainability continues, however, although we were relieved and grateful for the positive end of year total.

It was good that we were able to share our funding consultant's expertise in making a separate Community Fund application for £20,000 for the Church for the refurbishment of the Prospect Suite entrance and toilets and we heard in March that this had been successful.

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 211 such bookings this year and we thank Chris for all her work. 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 as a volunteer for banking our cash and cheques. We strengthened the team this year with two small part-time roles with Tim Ingram on graphic design and communications and Michelle Edwards as Co-leader of Playing with Peace Parents and Toddlers. Both have made a great contribution this year and we thank them.

Trustees

The Centre is overseen by our trustees and we began the year with seven, but it has been a year of change. In November 2023, [Hugh Donald](#) resigned due to a change in personal circumstances and [Pam Smith](#) felt it was time to conclude her work as trustee nominated by the church. [Desley Taylor](#) concluded her time as the minute secretary to the trustees in February. Due to a new work role [Samina Ali](#) concluded her time as a trustee in August. We owe a huge debt of thanks to all of these for their work as all but Samina had been with us since the trustee body was established in 2019 and have seen the Centre through its early years, including the challenges of Covid 19.

We're very grateful to our Chair, [Revd Mary Taylor](#) for her leadership and to the remaining trustees for navigating this time of change. [Rob Quarton](#) had been co-opted as our Treasurer in 2023 and was elected as a trustee at our last AGM in March. [Karen Ainsworth](#) has continued to serve as has [Andrew Taylor](#) although he gave notice that he would conclude his last year of service in November 2024 as a trustee nominated by the church. We carried a vacancy for a trustee nominated by the church for much of the year, but were delighted when [Guy Hirst](#) offered his services and was appointed by the church in September. The trustees made an approach to another potential trustee during the year and whilst this person is enthusiastic about the Centre's work they are building their relationship with the Centre in another way for the time being. So, we finished the 23/24 year with five trustees. The trustees are certainly open to strengthening the trustee body with the appointment of those with the skills needed for future development, but in this year of change and challenging finances, continuity has been very valuable.

Networks

The Centre continues to work closely with [Blackley Baptist Church](#), [Bridge Builders Ministries](#), [Calderdale Interfaith](#), [Reconcilers Together](#), [Yorkshire Baptist Association](#) and the [Baptist Union of Great Britain \(BUGB\)](#) and have begun to discuss the possibility of a partnership with a regional association of Baptist churches. We were grateful for the [Revd Graham Ensor](#) from the YBA for encouraging us to see the Centre as more than a regional resource, but as a national resource, and for enabling us to have a meeting with the [Regional Team Leaders](#) of all 13 Baptist regional associations. This has raised the profile of the Blackley Centre nationally across BUGB. Jo was also invited to a national research dialogue for Restorative Practitioners hosted by The Mint House, Oxford, which was very helpful in developing relationships with other restorative organisations.

Rev Andy Williams **Rev Joanna Williams**
on behalf of The Trustees of The Blackley Centre.

Cross Lane Peace Doves, to celebrate every playground argument resolved by YPA's

