



Progressive Christianity Network -  
Britain

Registered Charity No: 1102164

# Annual Report & Financial Statements for the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007



St Faith's Vicarage, 62 Red Post Hill, London SE24 9JQ

# The Progressive Christianity Network - Britain

Registered Charity No: 1102164

Governing document:	Constitution adopted 22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2003, as amended 19 <sup>th</sup> January 2004 & 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2005
Object of the Charity:	The advancement of the Christian Religion in such exclusively charitable ways as the trustees in their absolute discretion see fit.
Main activities of the Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i) To support, promote and network open Christian understanding, both for individuals and for congregations.</li><li>ii) To be inclusive in its concern for that open understanding, wanting to hold together both social and theological concerns, and modern and post modern perspectives.</li><li>iii) To promote a way of living within the wide and rich diversity of church.</li><li>iv) To engage in discussion and negotiation with denominational leadership from within the membership of Christian churches, promoting agendas and understanding which are both liberating and radical.</li><li>v) To develop a visible presence of open Christian congregations and communities.</li></ul>
Address:	C/o St Faith's Vicarage, 62 Red Post Hill London SE24 9JQ
Bankers:	The Co-operative Bank, PO Box 250, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT
Independent examiner	Peter Stribblehill
Trustees for the period of this report:	
Chair	Hugh Dawes
Vice chair:	Charles Hedley
Secretary:	Jill Sandham
Treasurer:	Montague Lynds Adrian Alker John Churcher Trevor Dorey (until 20 <sup>th</sup> October 2007) Sandra Griffiths John Hetherington (resigned 20 <sup>th</sup> October 2007) Claire Jenkins Peter Knight (from 20 <sup>th</sup> October 2007) Mary McMahon Alan Powell Brian Wilson (1 year co-option from 17 <sup>th</sup> November 2007)

Cover picture: Jack Spong and Richard Holloway in Edinburgh, Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

# Chair's report on the Network

## 1st April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007

Members were informed at the Annual General Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007 of the change of the end of PCN Britain's financial year - with the agreement of the Charity Commission - from 31<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> December, so as to be in line with the membership year. This was to have effect from December 2007.

This annual report therefore, with the accompanying financial statements, reflects the charity's activities for just nine months, from April to December 2007.

### Administration

In that period the Management Committee met for regular business on three occasions in London, and also for one longer combined business and planning meeting in Leeds in November. The attendance rate at meetings, and the level of commitment of committee members, continued as in previous years to be very high. The Network was sustained during this period by the combination of their many hours of dedicated voluntary work for expenses only; and by the excellent of Olivia McLennan, the Network's Administrator, who continued to be employed for 9 hours per week, working from her home base and in close contact with the chair and secretary.

### Membership

The affiliation fee, with its rates of standard, donor and minimum, remained constant at £30, £45 and £15 respectively (plus whatever additional donations members wished and could afford to make.) All members (whatever rate they chose to pay) received full benefits of membership: these include reduced conference rate at events organised both by the Network and by St Mark's Centre for Radical Christianity in Sheffield, and 4 newsletters per year.

The total membership for the year at November 2007 was 330: 31 of these were new members, and 291 people renewing from the previous year. In addition there were 10 honorary members. 98 people paid by standing order - as all were encouraged to - approximately 10% more than in the previous year. 66.6% of members paid at the standard

rate, 14.9% at the donor rate, and 18.5% at the minimum rate.

The administrator began during this time the process of reordering the membership database by geographical region, so as to ease the process of informing local group convenors of new members in their area.

### Conferences and other events

In 2007 (as hinted above) closer links were formed with St Mark's Centre for Radical Christianity (CRC) in Sheffield, involving a co-ordination of events programmes. Network members had opportunity during the year to hear a very rich variety of speakers. Elizabeth Templeton and Ray Gaston spoke in Leeds in May - a event brilliantly organised by the local group there - under the title *How honest is your Christianity?* In October Bishop Jack Spong talked in four different venues to his book *Jesus for the Non-Religious* (this is commented on further below). And in November, at CRC, Dominic Crossan speaking at CRC on *Paul and the Justice of Equality*. A day when, in the words of the reviewer in the Newsletter 'Paul was largely rehabilitated in the minds of many gathered liberals!'

In addition - and sandwiched between Spong and Crossan - Charles Hedley, the Network's vice-chair, led the weekend retreat at St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden on *Living Progressive Christianity*. A valuable, thoughtful balance, for many who were there, to just thinking and talking about it!

### Website

The website remained - and developed - as an important feature of the Network's life and work through this period. John Hetherington continued as webmaster until he resigned from the committee in October 2007, for personal reasons. The committee expressed its immense gratitude to John for setting up the site and managing it with such devotion from the Network's beginning, and it is proper to reiterate that in this report. John recruited two volunteers before departing to monitor the website forum, and we are grateful for their efforts in doing this effectively. At the same time the committee agreed on significant upgrades to the current website, so as to

improve its navigability and accessibility. A search was also begun through an advertisement in the Newsletter for a new volunteer webmaster; though this was to prove unsuccessful, resulting in a different approach needing to be taken subsequently.

#### Development of a coalition

Adrian Alker completed visits to a range of like-minded organisations and bodies, including Inclusive Church, the Modern Churchpeople's Union, Free to Believe and Ekklesia.

Conversations included consideration of common resources such as a DVD production, as well as a potential common website.

Adrian's hard work indicated that a gentle, gradualist approach was required; but also showed that other organisations generally had positive feelings towards PCN.

The St Anne's Network was established as a coalition of inclusive groups working specifically towards the Lambeth Conference in July 2008. Adrian was a key member of this group, and used this to channel the desire to produce collaborative resource material, as well as seek other opportunities for collaboration. The St Anne's Network, at Adrian's instigation, committed itself to the production of a Handbook/Guide in support of the organisations represented, and Adrian agreed to edit such a volume.

#### Resourcing local groups

Following on from Sandra Griffiths and Trevor Dorey's visits to PCN's local groups across the country, the committee considered their findings. These included: the reality of a wide variation of types and sizes of groups – all therefore with different styles of working; the difficulty of recruiting members to PCN through local groups, though this had long been a part of their intended purpose; a general need for support and resourcing; and a challenge to find some consistency of focus, at least involving support for the Eight Points.

#### A mapping of friends

The need to recruit new members was recognised as crucial if PCN - Britain was to survive, expand and promote the progressive cause, since members represented the Network's only income source. In response to this, and because there were regular requests for locations of "PCN-friendly" churches, the committee decided to undertake a mapping exercise of churches who would welcome PCN members, and where members could feel

at home. A proposal was worked up and, through advertisement in the newsletter, a volunteer researcher was recruited in order to undertake the work. This was Brian Wilson, a member in the south west, whose obvious energy and enthusiasm led to his being very quickly co-opted onto the committee. His work, through consultation with members and with other groups, was largely completed by the end of the year, and the process of collating the information into accessible online format was begun.

#### Other matters

Such were the primary themes of these nine months' work, but much else was considered, discussed and done. The development of a DVD was looked at (with or without partners) to promote an open theological approach, but put on hold in the absence at this point of any outside financial support (since the cost of something well done would be very considerable), and in the light of developments at that time through the St Anne's Network.

The committee also agreed to explore further some direct resourcing of local groups through material and publications, as well as speakers; to enable local group conveners to meet together annually for support and exchange of ideas; and to encourage the development of regional events hosted by the larger local groups. The Leeds conference in May was a very good example of what this could offer, and there have been some other smaller local initiatives since. It would be good if, as suggested in last year's report, such local initiatives could be pulled into the total work of the Network. A framework for the sharing of such plans, and earlier notice of them, could allow them to be publicised and advertised more widely; bring more people into them; heighten the profile of the Network as a whole; and increase awareness of its purposes.

Such heightening of profile was one of the reasons for the decision to have a presence at the Lambeth Conference scheduled for July 2008 in Canterbury, and to book a stall in the Market Place there. This engagement with denominational gatherings was to be taken further in the following year.

#### Spong Tour

The heightening of profile, and also the positive possibilities of Management Committee and local groups working together was clear in this, the major event of 2007, which drew packed

audiences to all four of its venues – Malvern, Leeds, Edinburgh and London.

Bishop Spong has been a true and loyal friend to PCN – Britain from its very beginnings, but this was the first time the Network had organised a tour by him in this country. The tour tested us and stretched us and, while much was done by teams of volunteers in the four venues, it could not have happened without the work of Jill Sandham as our volunteer Secretary, and Olivia McLennan as Administrator.

Statistics can tell part of the story. Of those who attended the four events (a total of approximately 670 people), the number of PCN – Britain members present varied between 7% and 41% of the total in the different venues. 41% of current members attended one or other of the meetings.

Each event was used at the time as an opportunity to promote the Network and encourage more people to join, and the careful recording of all attendees in the different settings meant that all non-members among them received a complimentary newsletter in

December 2007. This would have a significant effect on new membership in the following year.

The tour was advertised in the Church Times, the Methodist Recorder, Life and Work, the Tablet and Inspires, and promotional opportunities were also available through the mailings of other organisations. Analysis showed that the single most effective form of advertising was through the PCN newsletter, especially for the London venue. Word of mouth was also relatively effective, especially in Edinburgh and Malvern. The tour made a small profit, which included profits from book sales.

But it did much more than that. It heartened members and non-members alike - progressive believers in situations where cause to take heart can sometimes feel slight. "The Anglican Communion will die of boredom long before it dies of heresy," Jack Spong said – which would be true other denominations too. The Christian story deserves better, which is why PCN – Britain needs to be there – and will be!

Hugh Dawes

# Independent Examiner's report to the Progressive Christianity Network

This report on the accounts of the Progressive Christianity Network (PCN) for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 December 2007, which are set out on page 1 is in respect of an examination carried out under s.43 of the Charities Act 1993 ("The Act").

## Respective responsibilities of the PCN and the examiner

As members of the PCN you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts: you consider that the audit requirement of section 43(2) of the Act do not apply. It is my responsibility to issue this report on those accounts in accordance with the terms of the Act.

## Basis of this report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the Act. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCN and a comparison of the accounts with those records. It also includes considering any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

## Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act; and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the Act have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed



Dr Peter Stribblehill

September 2008

# Progressive Christianity Network -Britain

Registered Charity No.1102164

Statement of Receipts and Payments for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS		
	31/12/2007	31/03/2007
	£	£
RECEIPTS		
Member -individual <sup>(1)</sup>	9321	11728
Member church	0	0
Donations	135	575
Gift Aid	425	0
Investment Income	510	271
Conference and retreat income <sup>(2)</sup>	10991	2522
Sales	1350	989
Sundry	142	
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>22874</b>	<b>16085</b>
PAYMENTS		
Publicity, stationery & printing	1905	1568
Administrator's salary	3939	5270
Postage	653	511
Administration	236	688
Website Costs	112	224
Conference/Retreat expenses <sup>(2)</sup>	6665	3416
Cost of books sold	924	838
Board Expenses	1190	2412
Computer expenses	34	152
Sundries	176	0
Group/Coalition Development	209	1612
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>16043</b>	<b>16691</b>
<b>Net Incoming Resources</b>	<b>6831</b>	<b>-606</b>
<b>CASH FUNDS 1ST APRIL 2007</b>	<b>7397</b>	<b>8003</b>
<b>CASH FUNDS 31st December 2007</b>	<b>14228</b>	<b>7397</b>

Notes:

(1). Receipts from individual members include £5770 relating to subscriptions for 2008.

(2). Conference /retreat income and expenditure include income and costs associated with the lecture tour of Bishop John Selby Spong. These were

Receipts	6978
Fees	3508
Venues	310
Incidentals	380
Advertising	725
	<u>4923</u>
	<u>2055</u>

# Progressive Christianity Network -Britain

Registered Charity No.1102164

Statement of Assets and liabilities at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	
	31/12/2007	31/03/2007
	£	£
CASH FUNDS		
Bank Balances	14228	7397

Signed on behalf  
of all trustees



H. Dawes  
Chair



M.R.Lynds  
Treasurer