

Report by the Chair of the Board of Trustees for the year 2021/22

This year the Board took the decision to formalise staff contracts and offer contracts of employment rather than self-employed contracts to SKUK staff. Generally, staff had been with the organisation for some years and we felt, and were advised that the change in contract status was needed to fulfil our legal obligations. We also wanted to show our appreciation for all the hard work put in by the team of advocacy workers over the years.

I am very pleased that Charlotte Marshall is now in the role of director of SKUK. We were sad to lose Phoebe Rison as senior advocacy officer and Ruth Thomas as advocacy officer with the under-35s, both of whom felt unable to take up their new roles for different reasons. We are planning to have a full staff team by early autumn.

The focus of work this year has remained advocacy through the morally responsible investment programme closely linked to the Cry for Hope, channelled through the denominational groups. Charlotte is reporting on some considerable successes in her report and other aspects of this year's work.

One highlight of the year was the theology group residential in March 2022 at St. Deniol's college, Flintshire. I would like to extend a huge thank you to Brian Brown and Warren Bardsley for organising this. After long discussions and excellent presentations from home and international speakers, the group produced the Gladstone statement calling on churches to take action for Palestine. This is on our website and has gained international traction.

It is with great sadness to hear from Brian Brown that he is stepping down from chairing the theology group. We will all miss his wisdom, knowledge and experience greatly and extend a big thank you to him. I hope he will not go too far away!

Another new initiative for this year was the series of Lent talks which went out on zoom. Participation and feedback were extremely good. My huge thanks for this go to the team who put the talks together, wrote resources and organised the speakers, particularly John Howard and David Haslam.

Throughout the year we have worked closely with our partners in Palestine, Sabeel Jerusalem and Kairos Palestine, in particular taking part in Sabeel broadcasts and as active members of Global Kairos for Justice (GKJ) which is organised by Kairos Palestine. I co-chair the GKJ theology group and Charlotte chairs the Campaigns group. We have been involved with international colleagues in ensuring Palestinian voices and issues are brought forward at the World Council of Churches general assembly meeting taking place now the first week in September in Germany.

I would like to thank all the SKUK staff team for their hard work over the past year and their patience through the restructuring process. I would also like to thank all the Board for their support, hard work and good counsel. But the biggest thank you is to you the members for your continuing support for the work of SKUK, including responding so generously to our fundraising initiatives. Together we can make a difference. Sadly in July we lost a great advocate Patrick Darnes who for many years, as a member of SKUK worked ceaselessly for Palestinian human rights.

I look forward to working with you all over the next twelve months. The outlook everywhere looks bleak, inside and outside Palestine but I give you the words written by our Palestinian brothers and sisters in the Kairos Palestine original document "A Moment of Truth" – *"despite the lack of even a glimmer of positive expectation, our hope remains strong...because it is from God. God alone is good, almighty and loving and His Goodness will one day be victorious over the evil in which we find ourselves"*.

Karen Fairfax-Cholmeley

4th September 2022