

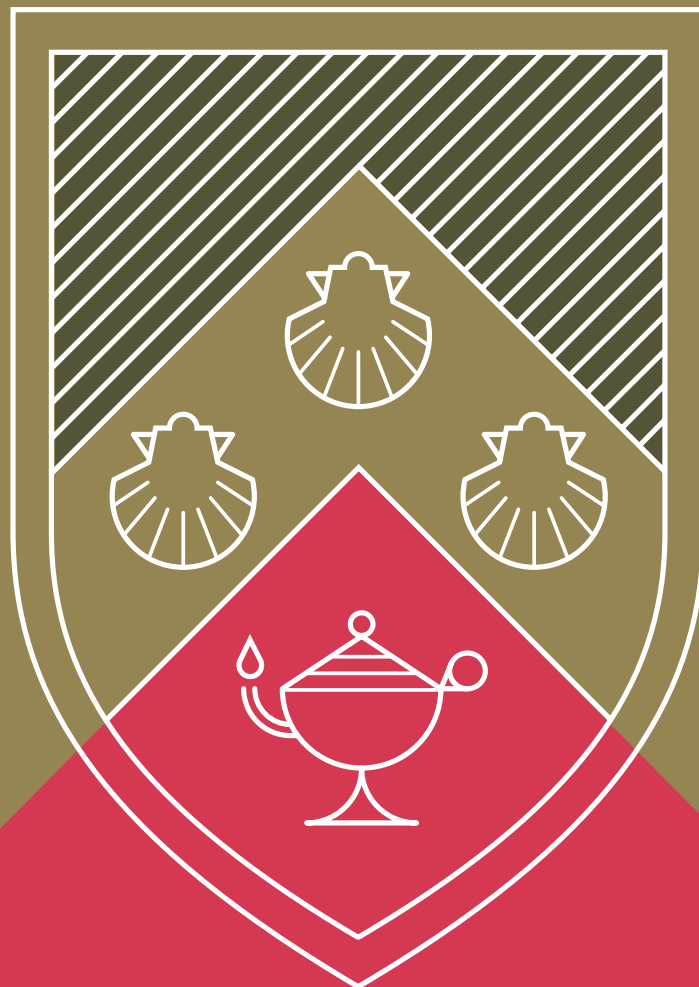
# Southlands Methodist Trust

## Review of Activities

September 2024 – August 2025



— S M T —





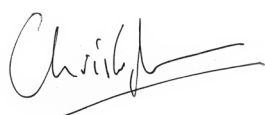
# Overview and Introduction

The trustees of the Southlands Methodist Trust (SMT) are pleased to offer this account of the charity's work during the course of 2024-25.

The charitable purposes of the Trust, its position within a collegiate university, and its reach into the broader learning life of the Church provide opportunities for creative and innovative interventions. Working so closely with institutions that share commitments to changing the world and transforming lives, SMT interventions have the potential for significant impact on learning and practice that delivers meaningful change in the public domain. Throughout this report are examples of how the charity has advanced that mission.

The reporting year saw the confirmation of a new strategic plan for the SMT, developed with ambitions of growth in the breadth and depth of its work across three key areas of significance to the Methodist Church and to society in general. The year ahead will see activity to ensure the foundations of that plan begin to be set, with new staffing and funding models in development.

Thank you for taking an interest in the Southlands Methodist Trust. Please do contact the trustees if you would like to work with us and help shape what we become in future years. Those wishing to find out more about our work are invited to visit [southlandsmethodisttrust.org.uk](http://southlandsmethodisttrust.org.uk) and [susannawesleyfoundation.org](http://susannawesleyfoundation.org) and to follow the social media accounts listed at the end of this report.



Dr Christopher Stephens  
Head of Southlands College



The Reverend Dr Jonathan Dean  
Chair of Trustees

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# Strategic Review

At the end of the 2023-24 academic year, the SMT agreed a new strategic plan, in conversation with the Methodist Church's senior leadership. The plan is designed to enable the SMT to deliver those parts of the Methodist Church in Britain's Mission in Higher Education which it can best or uniquely offer, focused on three broad areas of work:

- Embodying Methodist Higher Education in Practice
- Enabling, Delivering and Promoting Methodist Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE)
- Providing Higher Education Expertise to Advance Methodist Mission in Primary and Secondary Schools

The first of these areas will include work to support Southlands College as the Methodist College of the University of Roehampton, nurturing student success and community flourishing, chaplaincy and pastoral care, the formation of values-based leadership, and the broadening of access to higher education. It will explore the development of new educational programmes, as well as providing learning opportunities for Methodists and the encouragement of student exchange between Methodist institutions internationally.

The second of these areas will be the primary focus of the SMT's resources. In developing their strategic plan, the trustees also agreed that this work will collectively be known as the Susanna Wesley Foundation (that name previously having applied to a narrower collection of the Trust's work. This work will cover a broad range of activity, both in Britain and overseas, including the development of grants and visiting fellowship schemes, sponsoring postdoctoral students, generating research projects and taking on commissions from partner institutions, strengthening ties between Methodist institutions in the UK, Europe and globally, holding conferences on topics of importance to church and society, publishing both academic and practice-focused materials, and developing themed development programmes focused on the Church's mission.

The third area will aim to encourage a research-led culture in Methodist Schools, supporting Methodist Education as an HE discipline and supporting the development of skills amongst Methodist teachers, including through the creation of new courses. It will also seek to nurture the Church's wider understanding and valuing of teaching as a Christian vocation.

## Plans for 2025-26

The SMT has committed to increasing its expenditure through the creation of new staff posts and increased grant making to enable this strategic plan to be realised in the coming 10 years. 2025-26 will see the development of the SMT's infrastructure to position it well to do this, along with the development of more concrete measures of impact to discern the success of the Trust's work.

# Embodying Methodist Education in Practice

## Enhancing Leadership in Southlands College

Southlands Methodist Trust works through and with Southlands College to nurture a learning community that makes a difference to the staff and student experience at the University of Roehampton. In addition to providing funding for a Deputy Head of Southlands College and a College Engagement and Activities Officer in the college team, in 2024-25 the SMT provided grants and direct funding for a number of key joint initiatives. That joint work aims to cultivate a compassionate and innovative environment at the college that encourages initiatives and ways of working that enhance student success, embed Methodist values and a Methodist ethos into the culture and community of college, and develop a strong and prosperous relationship between the college, the university and the Methodist Church.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the SMT has supported Southlands College to improve the variety and quality of its events programme, and placed a further emphasis on creating learning communities that enable students to consider who they are, with opportunities for members of the college to explore their values and identity in relation to their personal, professional, and academic goals. We have developed our programmes of activities using a collaborative approach, co-creating initiatives with student leaders, academic departments, external partners, the chaplaincy team, sister colleges, and other university departments.

An openness to original ideas for events and projects, while carefully considering the needs of our community, has enabled the college team to deliver distinctive learning opportunities that initiate the sharing of knowledge across topics such as culture, society, language and history. Student leaders are a key driver in enabling peer-to-peer learning at Southlands, by designing events that allow students to consider their own values and those of the college.



# Enhancing Leadership in Southlands College

The college was founded by the Methodist Church as a teacher training institution, and the college aims to be a space for staff to develop in their vocations and teaching practice too. The college has provided training and development for its team members, which have contributed to the successful growth of the college over the past year.

Better trained college staff can deliver more effective programmes of learning for our student leaders. Building on the introduction of the Student Leadership Certificate in the 2022-23 academic year and its expansion to include all student leaders at Southlands College in 2023-24, we expanded the course to our sister colleges at the university for the 2024-25 academic year, continuing our model of working at and through Southlands but for and with the whole university community. We also progressed the programme further in three key areas:

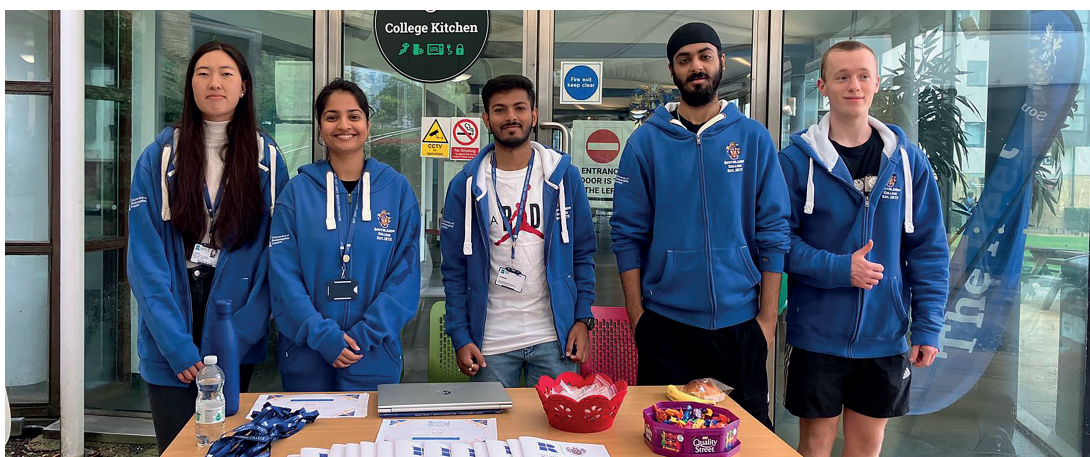
- increasing the variety and quality of monthly training sessions
- exploring different pedagogical tools that widen participation e.g. Action-Based Learning
- providing resources through mediums that suit different types of learners and creating a new virtual learning environment.

Upon completion of the required modules, students receive a certificate of completion from the University's Department of Continuing Education. We hope also to develop an accredited course for all student leaders at the University of Roehampton in 2025-26.

Additional coaching, training and mentoring for student leaders has a direct impact on graduate outcomes, and evidence has been gathered of graduate outcomes. A study of 71 Southlands student leaders shows:

- Significantly higher levels of course completion than for the average Roehampton student (93% compared with 82%)
- Among leavers, 98% of student leaders had achieved graduate-level careers after 15 months, compared with a UoR average of 68%

In the academic year 2025-26, the SMT will continue to support this work, having committed funds to support the staffing provision in the college team which develops and delivers student leadership programmes, along with grant support for focused activities for staff and student training and development. Staff of the SMT will also contribute to aspects of those programmes.



# Student Engagement and Outcomes

To achieve its goals in enhancing student engagement and outcomes, the SMT with Southlands College focuses its activities around four broad areas:

- Offering welcome, hospitality and belonging within an inclusive environment
- Engaging our community in critical issues facing society and encouraging individuals to explore their own values and identity
- Developing students as ethical leaders, enhancing their skills, nurturing success and celebrating achievement
- Influencing whole-university identity and activity in ways which advance the college's values and mission.

The SMT provides significant support to the college for activities that help achieve the above aims. This involves valuable staff support, advice and guidance to the college team to plan, deliver and evaluate initiatives that benefit the wider university, as well as specific financial support for events and projects.

The 2024-25 academic year marked a period of significant growth for Southlands College as we broadened the scope of our community-building and learning activities, with the college surpassing 10,000 total annual attendees, a 45% increase in event attendance compared to the previous academic year for the first time, across 161 events. Our focus this year was to create experiences that not only brought students together but also enabled them to develop confidence, celebrate identity, skills and a stronger understanding of themselves within a diverse college community. This growth was driven by an effort to respond to student feedback and design events that students identify as meaningful and relevant to their development.

The year saw a substantial progress towards our aim to deliver more student-led events. There was a 52% increase in the number of events delivered by student leaders in 2024-25. Student leaders planned, delivered and evaluated 88 events and supported a further 48 events. This strengthened the quality and diversity of our event programme while ensuring that activities remained aligned with student interests, academic priorities and the broader educational ethos of Southlands.

Examples of college initiatives supported this year by the SMT include:

- The college worked in partnership with the Faculty of Business and Law throughout the year to deliver our joint event offering to a six-intake student life cycle. College staff contributed to key faculty activities, including a number of NSS events and a Green Jobs Panel Talk, where a member of the college team participated as a guest speaker. Student leaders organised faculty events such as the Postgraduate Class of 2025 Dinner and the Student Voice Forum. Welcome events for late arrivals were arranged in coordination with academic staff, ensuring they felt welcomed and supported even if they had missed earlier inductions.
- The college team organised a number of cultural events that brought vibrancy and energy to the college community throughout the year. Highlights included Christingle Making, African Drumming, Pancake Day, Cupid's Carnival, Holi, and Vesak, with the Diwali Celebration alone drawing over 200 students. These occasions offered students opportunities to share their own cultures and gain a deeper understanding of one another.
- The college delivered 34 training sessions and workshops for students, including LinkedIn Masterclasses, Professional Work and IT Skills and Public Speaking. The

# Student Engagement and Outcomes

college also supported events such as the Green Jobs Panel Talk, 10,000 Black Interns, The Enterprise Exchange and Part-Time Jobs Fair to offer students opportunities to engage with industry professionals, gain insights into different sectors and enhance their employability skills.

- Learning and personal development extend beyond the classroom and the college is committed to providing opportunities for students to engage and learn through off-campus experiences. Our student leaders organised off-campus activities such as a Valentine's Day visit to a local care home, a Richmond Park picnic and guided trips around London to museums and Christmas Markets.
- Over the winter break, the college hosted seven festive events for 140 students who stayed on campus. Led by our student leaders, these gatherings fostered social connection, and a sense of belonging, ensuring students felt supported and engaged throughout the holiday period.
- The college worked with TangleWorks, an external training provider to run the Certificate Facilitation Skills and Lego Serious Play techniques for staff, funded by the Southlands Methodist Trust. 17 staff members from across the university attended the training and learned how to use the pedagogical framework.
- Southlands has continued to incubate sustainability events and projects at the college, by involving the wider university community and academic departments to find ways of transforming enthusiasm for making the world a more sustainable place into initiatives that have a real impact, and help students develop their practical skills and knowledge. When anyone steps onto campus, Southlands Meadow is a visible embodiment of the college's commitment to making our green campus even greener. The continuation of the No Mow May project on Southlands Quad has once again revealed how wildlife can flourish in a small patch of land when left undisturbed. Students and staff responded with enthusiasm, noting frequent sightings of ducks, birds, foxes and insects across the emerging habitat, which continued to bring a lively sense of biodiversity to the very centre of the college.



*Celebration of Holi at Southlands College*

# Community Music

Music continues to enhance the experience of students and staff at Southlands College, and across the university. It offers routes into engagement between staff and students, and ongoing opportunities for social learning. Music gives a sense that different cultures can feel care and respect for each other within the college, as we share in each other's gifts. It has been a core feature of Methodist community-building historically, lived now afresh in this modern educational context.

Our communal areas are important in providing the right environments for these interactions, as well as providing spaces for creativity and reflection. The Well, with its SMT-funded Yamaha grand piano, has been a welcoming space for many individuals to practise and play during breaks from study. The Music Room, equipped with pianos and drumkit, is a flexible space for bands and groups. It has also had an increase in use from staff from academic and support services this year, helping to make the campus a pleasant place to work.

Temporary staff members in the college team, including those funded by the SMT, have taken responsibility for supporting the music community and overseeing the music scholarship programme. With limited resources, they have been able to support a variety of events and initiatives that support the holistic development of students.

The college implemented new processes for managing the music spaces and equipment more efficiently and developed consistent and engaging communications for the music offering at the university, resulting in a 48% increase in usage of the music room across the academic year.

Music scholarships continued for the 2024–25 academic year, jointly funded by the SMT and the four colleges at the university. This year, the scholarships received 33 applications, with seven successful music scholars selected, recognised not only for their musical talent but also for their enthusiasm to participate and eagerness to develop further. Our music scholars performed at numerous events across the colleges and the university.



# Community Music

The college supported 21 events that had a musical focus in the 2024-25 academic year, including:

- African Drumming workshops for Black History Month, led by alumni Steven Kasamba. The sessions received lots of positive feedback, with 33 staff and students participating throughout the day. Students had the opportunity to experience a different style of music, learning to play African drums and dance along to the rhythms.
- We hosted a Musician's Welcome, giving both the college and students a chance to get to know the musicians on campus and explore ways to support them and the wider music community throughout the year.
- Our student leaders also hosted a range of music events last year such as the Christmas Karaoke, as well as a number of Open Mic Nights. These student-led events were extremely popular, with over 200 students attending across the year.
- Our University Carol Service with our sister colleges brought a different choir, made up from staff and students, together for traditional carols and music.
- Musicians at the university performed at many events throughout the year, including Whitelands College May Day, RoeFest, Southlands Summer Social, and numerous other events throughout the year.

Looking ahead to the 2025–26 academic year, SMT will continue to fund staffing in the college team which supports the management and enhancement of music provision in the college. With SMT support, Southlands aims to develop a longer term strategic plan for music at Roehampton including:

- staffing proposals to embed permanent support for the music community
- structures for making the music scholarship programme more effective, including providing Music Scholars with more opportunities to perform
- developing an event programme further, to widen participation in music and deliver more learning opportunities for students.



# Nurturing excellence in values-driven education, supporting students in crisis

The SMT seeks to celebrate achievement and encourage excellence in values-driven education at Southlands College through awarding a range of prizes to staff and students. In 2024–25 these included a number of awards specifically celebrating the Methodist identity of the college and its community. For example:

- The Susanna Wesley Award was given to a female member of staff who promotes a values-focused approach in their work to achieve outstanding performance in educational leadership at Southlands.
- The Charles Wesley Award was given to a member of the college who contributed in an exceptional way to the development of community music at the college.
- The John Wesley Award was given to a student who made a particularly notable contribution to the student chapel community.

During the College's 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations in 2022, the Trust decided to promote six different funding opportunities for students, some of which were new initiatives launched within the anniversary year. The funds were made available through a total of four scholarships and two bursaries, and were committed again in 2024-25:

- Southlands Teaching Scholarships, for students on an undergraduate teacher training course at Roehampton
- Southlands Anniversary Scholarships (Education), for undergraduate students in the School of Education on a range of study programmes
- Southlands Anniversary Scholarships (General), available to undergraduates from across the university
- The Susanna Wesley Foundation DTh Scholarship: an annual scholarship each year to an individual seeking to study for their Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology
- Wesley's Chapel Emergency Fund, a bursary fund to support general living costs for students in financial hardship

In 2025, the SMT decided to consolidate the remaining funds designated for these purposes along with other bursary donations into two new categories of awards for students at Southlands College:

- A student Emergency Fund, managed by the college Chaplain and Head of College, to direct towards students in particular hardship, to support living costs.
- A Head of College fund to support innovative work to improve student engagement at Southlands – specifically work targeted at the most vulnerable students.

# Nurturing a dispersed alumni community

Central to the development of a meaningful college community is the work done at Southlands College to sustain relationships with former college members. Staff and students at Southlands collaborate closely with SMT trustees and staff of the Trust to shape opportunities to enrich our community by engaging with this dispersed community.

The SMT provides ongoing support for driving this work by funding the Southlands College Archives Historian, whose responsibilities include engagement with our alumni communities. The focus of our communication with the college alumni is through the *Southlander* – our annual magazine. Supported by the Trust financially and through contributions by staff members, this magazine includes news from the college and university, the SMT, reminiscences from alumni, and stories drawn from the archive.

The Head of College, the Executive Head of the SMT, the Chaplain and the Archives Historian sustain contact with a number of key former students, staff, and the families of those who have passed away and organise opportunities to visit the college for reunions and special services.



# Chaplaincy

Southlands is home to the College Chaplain and Muslim Chaplain who serve the Southlands College community and encourage a supportive environment where individuals can flourish. They also work collaboratively as part of a wider multi-faith team across the university who in turn relate closely with the college team.

Methodist Chaplaincy is overseen at the college by the Methodist Church through the Southlands Liaison Group and the Southlands Methodist Trust, and the SMT provides practical support both through active participation in chaplaincy's work, and also through providing funding for chaplaincy resources, activities and staffing.

The role of Chaplaincy Community Worker (CCW), paid by the SMT, supports the work of the Methodist Chaplain and develops their own vocation *in situ*. In 2024-25, that post was vacant, but the Trust provided support through the appointment of a temporary support worker in the chapel. Looking to 2025-26, to support the developing needs of the chaplain and college, a further temporary staff post – College Engagement and Activities Officer – will be part-funded by the SMT to provide part-time support for chaplaincy activity. It is anticipated that a CCW will be appointed to begin work in September 2026.

## Chaplaincy: Rooted in distinctive ethos and enduring values

At Southlands, our Chaplains prioritise work that speaks of the values and ethos formed from the college's Methodist heritage alongside work that lives out those values in practice, captured in our adopted Methodist adage 'do all the good you can, to all the people you can'.

Over the past year this has included:

- Caring for others and nurturing a sense of mutual value through the provision of pastoral and bereavement support to students and staff. Through their professional pastoral practice, and the Chaplaincy Listening Service, chaplaincy staff have offered both intentional presence and prioritised time for pastoral care and bereavement support to staff and students throughout the year.
- Enhancing our sense of community and belonging through thoughtful and reflective responses to our college context. Examples directly supported by the SMT include:
  - ▷ Continuing to raise awareness of issues affecting students such as the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and addressing those issues directly. For 6 months, the SMT paid for a part-time Project Officer to manage the college's Community Fridge project, which provided free food to students in need and reduced food waste from commercial outlets. Chaplains also organised the Advent collection of hygiene products to support students experiencing hardship.
  - ▷ The Southlands Venture Fund, providing awards for students to run projects or campaigns about issues of significance to their community and the wider world. One award was made, which had the purpose of extending awareness and understanding of neurodiversity and affirming those with neurodivergent identities. It achieved this through a chapel-based exhibition 'UR Neurobeautiful', showcasing the artwork of one of our PhD students and attracting over 200 guests from across a range of faculties and student support services. Those attending the exhibition engaged with their own specific characteristics through an interactive exhibition activity, as well as with neurodivergent ethnographic stories, art and reflections.

- Fostering care for ourselves and our neighbours by modelling and promoting living well in the world and encouraging students to consider their vocations. This has been achieved in a number of ways including: the holding of discussion groups and workshops that explore themes such as everyday self-care, social responsibility, community engagement, and sustainable living; supporting the continuing relationship with the London Wetland Centre as a university partner and promoting awareness of environmental justice issues within the college community; a continued commitment to Fairtrade; and contributing a student leadership training module on 'values' along with the Susanna Wesley Foundation.

## Chaplaincy: Supporting faith and spirituality

Methodism identifies worship as one of its four core priorities. Our college chaplaincy staff work within the wider multi-faith chaplaincy team to ensure that appropriate opportunities for inclusive and accessible worship are offered to our community. Over the past year this has been illustrated in several ways:

- Offering welcome and hospitality, as well as resources for engaging with faith, through the provision of physical space.
- The development of our online presence and creative resources.
- Working within Southlands and the wider Chaplaincy Team to promote community cohesion and model peaceful co-existence through a wide range of multi-faith activity and the sharing of our respective faith traditions.

## Chaplaincy: Promoting an active and inclusive community through events and activities

The Methodist Church is committed to building inclusive communities and celebrating diversity. The college's chaplaincy representatives have contributed to this work in a number of ways, creating inclusive spaces in which friendships can be formed and diversity celebrated. Examples include:

- The development and maintaining of a Sensory Room in the College Chapel
- Visiting schools for religious literacy programmes and diversity celebration days.



# Enabling, Delivering and Promoting Methodist Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE)

## The Susanna Wesley Foundation

The Susanna Wesley Foundation is a centre for research, dialogue and innovation based at Southlands College, University of Roehampton, and supported by the Methodist Church.

## The Foundation's approach and intentions

The continuing purposes of the Susanna Wesley Foundation are to share understanding and learning for the benefit of churches, to influence practice, and to build flourishing, inclusive and enriching communities. Throughout 2024-25, the Foundation has continued to encourage and facilitate dialogue and collaboration, and to draw on different disciplines, on lay as well as ordained perspectives, and on practitioner as well as academic insights.

## Celebrating 10 years: 'Learning to Make a Difference'

On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025, friends, colleagues and associates gathered for an exhibition, symposium and dinner to mark ten years of the Susanna Wesley Foundation. The theme was 'Learning to Make a Difference'. A display of posters from recent and current research projects that have been supported by SWF and Southlands Methodist Trust, together with presentations and panel conversations, demonstrated the wide scope of SWF and SMT involvements and its engagement with the Methodist Church, the University of Roehampton, and other stakeholders. The focus was on the impact of these projects and how they had contributed to learning and change - in churches, schools, faith-based organisations, and communities, both within the UK and internationally.



# The Susanna Wesley Foundation

Two Roehampton projects supported by the Foundation were among those featured in the programme because they particularly demonstrate how research can make a difference.

- *Clean Energy and SDG awareness in Kenya with Tumaini Women*

An academic from Roehampton's Faculty of Business and Law talked about the project she conducted in partnership with a Methodist charity in Kenya, providing awareness training around clean energy for Tumaini women. With SWF funding, she researched networks, methods and approaches appropriate to the context to enable embedded learning and dissemination, evaluating levels of understanding and impact. The researcher received the Rising Star award from the university in recognition of the impact of her work on community and social justice. In accepting her award she wrote: 'I'm especially thankful to the Susanna Wesley Foundation, whose ongoing support has played a pivotal role in shaping my work. Their commitment to empowering marginalised communities, particularly through gender-focused and sustainability-driven initiatives, has enabled research that bridges academia and real-world change.'

- *Billy Waters is Dancing*

Another contributor from Roehampton, from the Humanities faculty, has been working in schools and other communities, drawing on her research about the life of Billy Waters, a Regency busker and an important but overlooked figure in Black British and disability history. With others, she has produced resources for secondary school students to build awareness and understanding and to develop skills in using historical sources and storytelling. The Foundation has been supporting the lead researcher and one of her PhD students to enable them to extend the reach of the research and resources, to evaluate the work's impact, and to reflect on the processes involved in knowledge transfer and exchange.

## Our community

### Sponsored doctorates

The Susanna Wesley Foundation continues to sponsor students undertaking their doctorates in theology at Roehampton. This year a new student joined the community of scholars. Her proposed project, 'Rewilding the church: how neurodiversity of wild worship outside can cause a holy rumpus within', explores how the neurodivergent community, engaged in outdoor workshop and forest church, can bring their insights to the wider church.

### Practical Theology

A series of practical theology seminars run by theologians within the university continues to be supported by the Foundation. Collaboration between SWF and theology at Roehampton has been of mutual benefit, with members of the department commenting on how the partnership has enriched Roehampton's theological landscape. SWF has been instrumental in enabling the Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee to draw on their scholarship for its work around 'Online Communion', by funding a theological action research project.

### Partnerships and accompaniment

Also enabling a broadening of perspectives and an expansion of expertise and scholarship have been SWF's continuing relationships with the Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics at ETF, Leuven, (with new work around the relationship between economics and theology), and with the Theological Action Research Network, TARN, with SWF supporting

# The Susanna Wesley Foundation

the production of a field guide introducing scholars to the methodology. The field guide will be launched in 2025-26.

The Foundation has continued to connect with Theos, contributing funding towards their project around forced migrants and the role of churches, *From Strangers to Neighbours*, in relation to resources for church leaders, and for policymakers and stakeholders, on refugee integration.

Throughout the year we have reflected with individuals and groups on their practice, contributed to colloquia and reviews, shared learning from our projects, and created networks of scholars and practitioners. These activities help us to disseminate learning from our various initiatives and connections and to extend the impact of our and others' work.

Examples of involvements in events and networks include participation in a symposium on the current state of congregational studies, (facilitated by Regent's Park College, Oxford), membership of the Human Rights Network of the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities (IAMSCU), involvement in a roundtable consultation on 'Methodist Ways of Life' in Oxford, and participation in the Methodist Church's learning review.

## Continuing themes

The Foundation has foregrounded different themes at its annual conferences over the years, among them, hope, learning, and diversity and inclusion, and these continue to provide foci for SWF research and initiatives, with some ongoing projects.

### Hope

The Foundation has funded a practical project around hope which is using creative and collaborative methods to explore lived experiences and theologies of hope within a local community. The first phase involved a paper at the Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference in Durham, with subsequent action research. The learning and findings will be available in 2025-26, and there will be a participatory community event.

Also connected to this theme is work which focuses on 'curating spaces of hope at a time of poly-crisis', through particular practices of leadership, involving dialogue, collaboration and co-creation. The SWF has contributed funding to the development of the pedagogy surrounding this.

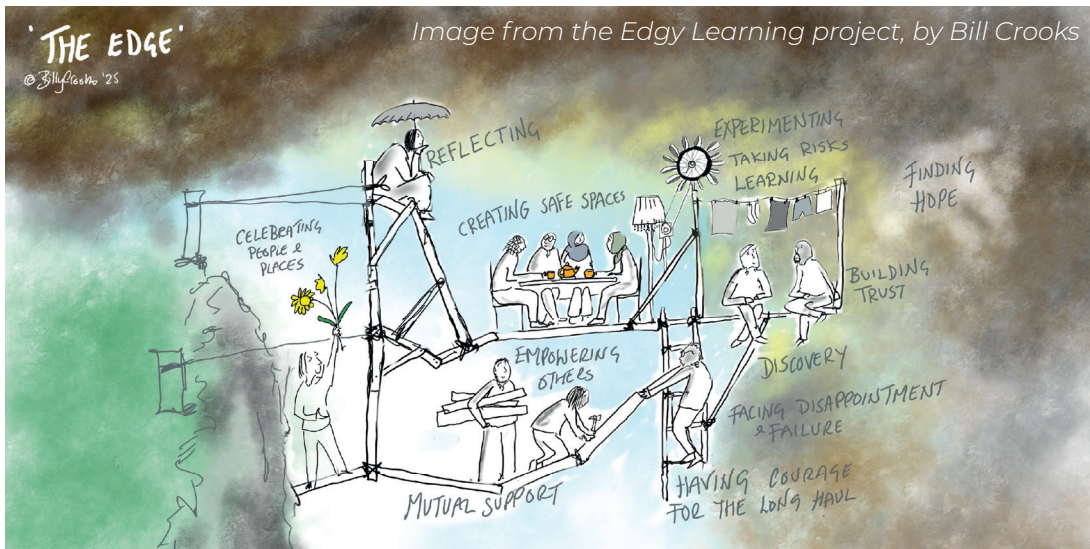
### Learning

Whilst learning for practice is the ultimate purpose of all that the Foundation does, SWF has sponsored specific research which looks at the anatomy of learning in faith-related contexts and its impact on faith and identity.

A project continued from 2023-24, 'Diaconal identity and work with refugees and asylum seekers', has used a distinctive reflective learning programme for those working with asylum seekers and refugees. Learning about that process as well as about the substantive topic of Christian engagement with refugees and asylum seekers has led to a resource which was published in 2025.

Another project, 'Edgy Faith and Edgy Learning', a theological action research project funded jointly by SWF and the Saltley Trust and researching the everyday experience of learning as disciples in 'edgy' places, has led to some fascinating insights about learning, about how faith changes and develops and is passed on, and about the impact of the processes involved in theological action research. Different sites have talked about how

# The Susanna Wesley Foundation



their involvement in the project has helped them, causing shifts in self-understanding and a renewed sense of purpose.

## Diversity and inclusion

The Foundation has continued to be involved in EDI work with the Methodist Church in Britain, evaluating progress in the implementation of its Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy.

A large-scale 5-year project, exploring how the disciplines of theology and religious studies operate in relation to race and class across the UK, received its small annual grant from the Foundation in 2023-24.

An ongoing research project 'Menopause and Theology' has led to various outputs - a short course for Sarum College, various conference papers, including for the British and Irish Association of Practical Theology (BIAPT), and a presentation at the Methodist Studies Seminar in Durham, together with two academic publications. Learning from the project will be captured in a resource, with an edited book also planned.

## A new emphasis: chaplaincy

Chaplaincy has increasingly featured in the work of the Susanna Wesley Foundation during the reporting year with research, collaborations and presentations, including a seminar at the annual conference of the Churches' Higher Education Liaison Group and involvement in an event around the role of university chaplains in free speech with the Free Churches Group.

Research around impact in higher education chaplaincy moved into a new phase, trialing, with chaplains across the sector, a reflective and evaluation resource designed to help them gather evidence of their impact and communicate that evidence in a range of contexts. The resource will be developed in response to feedback on their experience.

## Plans for the future

This reporting year saw a review of the structure of the Southlands Methodist Trust, with a view to growth in the work and resourcing of the Susanna Wesley Foundation. This growth will be realised in the next reporting year, allowing substantial work around equipping chaplaincy, and research and resources related to Christian/Methodist leadership in education, expanding on previous work in these areas.

# The Susanna Wesley Foundation: Grants for Innovative Research and Research-Related Activity

During 2023-24, twenty-five submissions were received from academics at the University of Roehampton for grant funding to support innovative research in line with the charitable objectives of the SMT. A discernment panel and full-board scrutiny took into account the quality and viability of submissions, being mindful of the range of topics, their intended impact, and the awardees' commitment to both inclusivity and sustainability. New researchers and more established academics provided a balance to work being funded, along with recognition of the importance of diversity.

After awards were made, it was expected that much of the work would be carried out during the 2024-25 year. However, access to the funding was delayed by administrative challenges within the university and extended research time has been required for all projects in receipt of funding. Nevertheless, progress has been made in seven of the ten selected projects:

## 1. *The 1917 Redux – The Occupation of Palestine*

This project is about the role of international law in mitigating conflict and violence and has sought to develop an archival knowledge base about the international law dimensions of British acquisition of control and authority over Palestine in the First World War. Progress has been made, with ongoing research in London archives and libraries and, with the purchase of literature, a survey of secondary sources, although the situation in the Middle East has affected the project's implementation. The researcher has been invited to present some of the work to the Jacob Robinson Institute for the History of Individual and Collective Rights at Tel Aviv University.

## 2. *Designing Embodied Education in Dance*

A successful Meeting and Sharing Event, with full participation from the international Designing Embodied Education in Dance (DEED) Network, brought together dance educators, educational leaders, scholars and artists at the University of Roehampton. Participants collaborated to synthesise five years of online exchange on embodied dance education and to inform the future development of reflective and practical workshops, culminating in a public research exchange event hosted by Roehampton's Centre for Research in Arts and Creative Exchange (CRACE). This was well attended by colleagues, alumni and international researchers. Postgraduate dance students contributed to sessions and reflections, offering vital student voice to the research. The website and video have been developed and are available to all, highlighting the work of DEED, increasing the impact and reach.

## 3. *Improving Inclusive Practice in Education for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)*

Research has been conducted with approximately 25 schools with the aim of identifying current awareness and resources, particularly for children and young people with 22q11.2 syndrome (22q). Based on these findings, a workshop developed a toolkit for schools including digital resources. These resources were piloted and adjusted, based on feedback. They have now been shared with schools across the UK, in order to equip them with effective strategies to support these young people, (and people with special educational needs more widely), and to foster more positive educational experiences.

A dissemination event was also held at the University of Roehampton to increase awareness and reach.

# Grants for Innovative Research and Research-Related Activity

## *4. A taste of home: supporting international students with dietary change and homesickness*

The project investigated the ways in which international students adapt to dietary changes, cope with homesickness, and navigate the challenges of maintaining a healthy diet within an unfamiliar cultural and food environment. The research also generated a series of evidence-based recommendations intended to strengthen the support for international students.

In June 2025, researchers presented the findings of their Taste of Home project at the University of Roehampton to an audience comprising students, staff, and external guests.

## *5. Harmonizing Heritage: African Music's Role in Amplifying Black Excellence*

This music project is dedicated to remixing and revitalising classic African songs from various regions and eras. A cover song has been selected to be remixed for the video being produced as part of the project, and a rapper and singer have been recruited to collaborate on the project. The current focus is securing a suitable music studio and producer to work with these artists and the chosen track.

A partnership with the Society of African Students to host a live event has been agreed in order to showcase the project.

## *6. Unpaid Labour and Mental Health*

This project has aimed to address a research gap, exploring the experiences and mental health of those who carry out unpaid labour in their employment and self-employment, in various fields. The research has involved narrative interviews.

## *7. Exploring how neurodiverse students can be best supported as they transition to university and throughout their degree*

This project is exploring the challenges that neurodiverse students face as they start and progress through their degrees and secondly investigate the factors which may predict successful outcomes in these students. Student participants have been recruited, and interviews are ongoing, with questions on a range of university experiences. Students are asked about things they have found helpful as well as the challenges they have experienced. The researcher presented an introduction to the study at the Neurodevelopmental Disorders Annual Seminar in June 2025, raising awareness of this work with other researchers. A further grant application to the BA / Leverhulme small research grants fund to extend this work to postgraduate students has been submitted as a result of the project.

# Grants for Innovative Research and Research-Related Activity

## Future Grants

During 2025-26, a decision was made by the trustees to broaden the scope of SMT grants for innovative RKE activity. Applications were invited from all UK institutions which are Methodist or Methodist-related, for work relating to the following areas, aligned with the priorities of the Susanna Wesley Foundation:

- **Learning for ministry, participation and collaboration**

Exploring the processes of equipping people, lay and ordained, to enable flourishing, inclusive communities.

- **Work, life and identity in ministry**

Exploring ways in which those called to roles in faith organisations shape their contributions and how this work impacts on identity and well-being.

- **Diversity and community**

Exploring issues around difference, identity, inclusion and participation in churches and faith communities.

- **Governance, management and organisation in churches**

Exploring structures, systems, decision-making and transformative change processes within churches and faith communities.

In total ten awards were made under the new programme, listed below. A further three projects will be discussed further with those involved with a view to supporting the work, if possible, via other SWF routes.

1. *The Sanctuary Movement in Methodism: A Local Study in its origins and implementation in Church and Society*

Reflection on the reception of the Sanctuary Movement spearheaded by the Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal within Methodism and beyond (particularly our ecumenical partners in the Church of England), focusing on one example of Chester, as a Borough of Sanctuary, with a Cathedral of Sanctuary, a University of Sanctuary and a Church of Sanctuary (Wesley Centre) as highlighted in a recent Theos Report.

2. *Let's Face It Immersive Arts Installation*

'Let's Face It' will be a powerful exhibition and a series of immersive experiences designed to explore the diverse journeys and faces of homelessness and house insecurity. Through a variety of arts media, the installation will endeavour to challenge prejudice and dismantle stereotypes.

3. *Pathway Paradox – Challenging Stigma through Serious Play*

This project combines arts, story and serious play to challenge stigma and deepen understanding of homelessness and accommodation insecurity. Building on the 'Let's Face It' installation, an integrated programme of activity will foster empathy, reflection and practical insight into the lived experience of homelessness. Resources developed through activities will be developed for wider use.

# Grants for Innovative Research and Research-Related Activity

## *4. Mapping Spiritual Development in Childhood: Theological and Scientific Insights for Interfaith Practice*

This project aims to develop a set of theologically and scientifically informed resources that support spiritual and religious development in children, with particular attention to developmental stages and child participation. It will contribute to the broader global Faith and Child Flourishing Study (FCFS), a longitudinal research initiative led by World Vision and a consortium of academic partners, which seeks to understand how children thrive across diverse contexts.

## *5. Exploring ‘tangible hope’ through experiential and reflective learning with grassroots Christian practitioners in regions affected by conflict or war*

The project aims to support Christian diaconal workers in regions affected by conflict or military warfare to reflectively develop their understanding of ‘tangible hope’ as an active virtue that may be found in their practice with people and communities.

## *6. Shoreline Methodist Community – A multi-media introduction to the unfolding story of a Methodist Online Community*

Shoreline Methodist Community ([www.shorelinemethodist.community](http://www.shorelinemethodist.community)) began on zoom in April 2020. Its online presence now includes weekly Sunday worship, a daily rhythm of prayer, a Justice-Seeking Church series, and discipleship groups. It is one of the few examples across the Connexion where the community gathers ‘predominantly’ online and there is no church building. The project proposes to build on two conference papers that Christine gave during 2024 at Ecclesiology and Ethnography Symposium (St John’s College, Durham; Sept 2024) and as part of the Methodist Studies Seminar (Lincoln College, Oxford; Dec 2024) exploring the widening participation and accessibility that Shoreline affords those seeking to worship and learn as Methodists in an online space. The project will allow Christine and Wayne (Grewcock) to spend some focussed time together, co-writing and extending these initial papers into a short volume with the addition of recorded video and audio material.

## *7. Exploring the observer paradox in theological education for ministry preparation*

How effective is theological education and ministerial formation in developing effective and sustainable ministry practice? This project explores an insight from my doctoral research, that intentional efforts in Christian formation might in fact be counterproductive, since the awareness of ‘technique’ can undermine genuine spiritual and vocational growth. Advanced theological study may thus actually be counterproductive to the stated goals by resulting in the ordinand/student evaluating and questioning the efficacy of the spiritual practices of both their role as leader and as worshipper, resulting in either 1) a move into parachurch ministries, or 2) an exit from vocational or lay ministry altogether.

## *8. “Engaging Justly in Discipleship and Preaching in a Digital Age: Impacts of digitality & the use of AI on identity, inclusion and participation”*

The project explores how both digital production and user engagement with discipleship resources and preaching impacts on identity, inclusion and participation together with how these resources are produced and then received to maximise engagement and minimise exclusion. The research asks what skills and methods enhance the reception of faith-based digital materials and how online engagement might enable people to be more true to themselves in terms of e.g. identity, neurodiversity, disability. Consideration will also be given to the ways in which digital practice could be adapted to enable people

# Grants for Innovative Research and Research-Related Activity

to feel more valued, included and safe, and how we can train/equip/cultivate positive habits so that people can engage well in digitality and AI through discipleship resources and preaching.

## 9. *Cyclical Bodies and Christian Spirituality*

This project seeks to connect the growing grassroots movement of 'Menstrual Cycle Awareness' to philosophical and theological perspectives within the Christian tradition. It will focus on exploring how embodied cyclicity, as a lived experience, might be brought into conversation with spiritual and social experience, understanding and practice. This is an academic project but also seeks to have real-world impact by working towards a book aimed at a popular audience on this topic.

## 10. *Developing CHIME (Community Health Interventions through Music Engagement) for diverse perinatal women in South London contexts*

In 2023-2024, CHIME (Community Health Intervention through Music Engagement) was co-developed with and for global majority postnatal women in the London borough of Lewisham in collaboration with the Diversity Matters branch of South East London Mind's Mindful Mums service. This project aims to expand this pilot music-based intervention to reach more global majority women in Lewisham and evaluate its impact. It will also explore opportunities for adapting CHIME for global majority women in two other London boroughs, Lambeth and Southwark, through formative stakeholder engagement work.

## 11. *Arab Women in Theological Education: A Contribution to Ecclesial Understanding of Christianity in the Middle East.*

Christianity in the Middle East is at a crucial crossroads, facing migration pressures, social and economic challenges, and questions of identity. In this shifting landscape, women have increasingly taken on visible roles in theological education, as students, teachers, researchers, and thought leaders. However, their voices are often under-documented.

Updated field research in Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan will:

- Document current realities in three key Arab contexts with rich theological traditions.
- Explore the interplay between faith and culture in theological education.
- Provide theological reflection that enriches wider ecclesial understanding of the church's witness in the region.

# Historic College Archives

The Southlands Methodist Trust employs an Archives Historian to oversee and develop the college's historic archive, with the support of the university through the provision of suitable space and access.

The focus of work during 2024-25 culminated in the mounting of the exhibition: *Remarkable Women: Making a Difference in Education and Beyond*. The exhibition, held in the college chapel, was the initiative of the Trust's CEO and led by the Archives Historian, funded by the SMT. Its production nurtured an unprecedented level of collaboration and input from all four colleges of the university.

The exhibition was a celebration of 36 trailblazing women, both staff and alumna linked to the colleges, highlighting their significant contributions to education and society – shaping students' lives and helping influence wider society. From the first female superintendent of Woolwich Arsenal during WWI and the first female prison commissioner, to the first Ghanaian student at Southlands College in 1946 – who later led Ghana's Education Department – their diverse stories demonstrate extraordinary impact. The success of this exhibition will hopefully lead to more collaborative projects. A further staging of the exhibition is anticipated in 2026, along with plans for new exhibitions in the future.

The regular work of the archive continued throughout the year; sorting, cataloguing and appropriately disposing of unrelated material. Lord Griffiths of Burry Port's sermons, which are held in the archive, have been digitised and may be made available online. We continue to actively seek out material that is missing from the archive, with a new emphasis on capturing the reminiscences of former members of staff and alumni.



# Europe and Worldwide

The Southlands Methodist Trust has committed to supporting the growth and development of Methodist Higher Education internationally, and to positioning Southlands College and the Susanna Wesley Foundation at the heart of the Methodist educational networks which exist regionally and globally.

The College remains a member of the International Association of Methodist-related Schools, Colleges and Universities (IAMSCU), and the SMT is a participating member of the Methodist Theological Schools in Europe (MTSE). In the reporting year, members of the SMT staff attended gatherings of both IAMSCU and MTSE, including a significant meeting in South Africa to explore the future of Methodist education in Africa. At that gathering, the CEO, who is also the Vice President of IAMSCU, established a new working group on chaplaincy. As Chair of the Strategic Committee for Institutional Collaborations, the CEO also fixed the terms of grants to be given through IAMSCU to nurture communities of scholarship and collaborative research ventures across Methodist Higher Education Institutions internationally. The Southlands Methodist Trust has committed to match funding IAMSCU's expenditure on this initiative in its early years.

Further areas of future development discussed include the creation of an international journal for Methodist higher education, and publishing an edited volume of key documents narrating international collaboration across Methodist institutions



*Meetings with the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*

# Providing Higher Education Expertise to Advance Methodist Mission in Primary and Secondary Schools

The Southlands Methodist Trust supports the work of Methodist primary and secondary schools through a commitment to collaboration in a range of ways that bring the benefits and skills of Higher Education to the schools sector. To ensure this collaboration flourishes to the greatest degree, the CEO of SMT sits on the Board of Trustees for MAST (which acts as the Religious Authority for Methodist state schools) and on the Methodist Schools Committee (which oversees all the Church's work in schools and encourages collaboration across sectors).

In the reporting year, the CEO of SMT worked with the CEO of the Epworth Education Trust and the Director of the Susanna Wesley Foundation to develop plans for a large-scale project to create training and development in Christian Leadership, specifically aimed at teachers, governors, and other leaders in related sectors. This work has flourished and the Associate Director of the SWF has been working closely with a range of stakeholders in Methodist Schools, including leaders in MIST and MAST, and specialist educationalists to develop this work into something more concrete.

This reporting year also saw the SMT commit significant funds to host a day conference for leaders in Methodist schools called a Celebration of Methodist Schools. The CEO was part of the leadership group organising the event. It took place in November of 2025 and the Associate Director of the SWF took a significant role in its delivery at Roehampton. The SMT also committed funds to provide the branding, design and promotional work associated with the conference, which saw 90 head teachers, chaplains and governors sign up for the event. It was also attended by the President of the Methodist Conference. Key speakers covered the issues of leadership in Christian schools, how schools can best tackle inclusion and SEND, and the how schools play a part in the work of the Kingdom



# Providing expertise to schools

of God. The day also enabled networking and mutual support between schools and their staff. The day was judged to be a huge success and there are plans to make this a regular part of the SMT's work to support Methodist Schools.

As part of its commitment to supporting schools, the SMT panel awarding grants for innovative research have a mind to where applications they receive might advance research into issues affecting the education sector. In 2024-25, an example of this was the project: Improving Inclusive Practice in Education for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). A dissemination event was held at Roehampton to increase awareness and reach of the work. Further details are mentioned above.



*Celebration of Methodist Education conference*

# Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

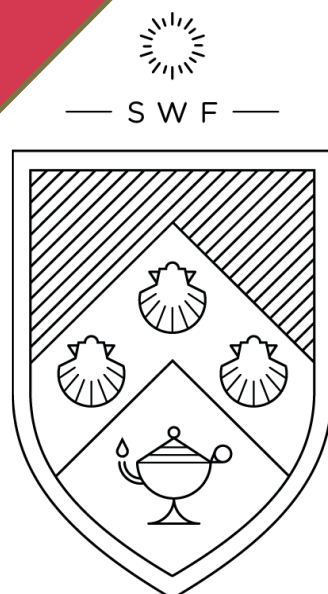
SMT recognises that its charitable purposes are advanced not only through programme delivery but also through responsible environmental, social and governance practice. During 2024–25, trustees strengthened SMT's approach to ESG, aligning financial, operational and programme activity with commitments to sustainability, inclusion and social responsibility.

## Environmental responsibility and climate stewardship

During the year, SMT achieved certified carbon neutral status, reflecting a systematic approach to measuring and offsetting operational emissions. This formed part of a broader commitment to environmental sustainability embedded within SMT's strategic planning and in the Methodist Church's wider commitment.

SMT also made significant investments in climate stewardship funds, ensuring that its financial resources are deployed in ways consistent with environmental responsibility and long-term sustainability.

Environmental sustainability was also reflected in SMT-supported activity. For example, Southlands College continued to develop biodiversity and sustainability initiatives on campus, including the maintenance of Southlands Meadow and the continuation of "No Mow May", engaging students and staff in practical environmental stewardship. SWF-supported research and knowledge exchange activity included work addressing sustainability and global economic justice, including research on clean energy awareness in partnership with a Methodist charity in Kenya and wider engagement with questions of extractive economic models.



Carbon  
Neutral  
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Southlands Methodist Trust is



# Environmental, Social and Governance

## Social responsibility, inclusion and widening participation

A commitment to widening participation in education and addressing social marginalisation remained a consistent theme across SMT's work. SMT-supported activity at Southlands College prioritised inclusion, belonging and student development, with particular attention to students facing structural disadvantage or barriers to participation. Evidence of impact includes improved academic and employment outcomes among student leaders supported through SMT-funded programmes, with significantly higher course completion and graduate-level employment rates than institutional averages.

SMT also supported initiatives addressing specific forms of marginalisation, including research on inclusive educational practice for pupils with SEND, chaplaincy-supported initiatives promoting neurodiversity and inclusion, and targeted interventions addressing student financial hardship, including the Community Fridge project and consolidated emergency funding mechanisms.

Through the Susanna Wesley Foundation, SMT supported research and dialogue on inequality, identity and justice within church and society, including work relating to diversity, migration and the experiences of marginalised communities.

## Governance and ethical practice

Trustees continued to strengthen SMT's governance framework, ensuring alignment between strategy, grant-making, investment decisions and the Trust's charitable purposes and values.

During the year, SMT established a series of trustee sub-committees with defined responsibilities across key areas of governance, including financial oversight, data security, risk management and ethical practice. These structures strengthened accountability, enhanced oversight of organisational risk, and supported more systematic integration of ESG considerations into SMT's decision-making.

Trustees understand ESG not as a peripheral concern but as integral to SMT's mission: advancing education, supporting research-informed practice, and contributing to more inclusive, sustainable and just communities within higher education, the Methodist Church and wider society.



The Southlands Methodist Trust  
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