

Superintendent Ministers of Central Hall

1911 - 1914 Rev John E Wakerley

John was born at Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire on 12th November 1858. In 1879 he was accepted for the Wesleyan Methodist Ministry and trained at Didsbury and Handsworth Colleges.

In 1884, he was appointed to Nottingham Wesley Circuit, going on to serve for 14 years at St John's Square, Clerkenwell, seven years at East Ham and three years at Westminster Central Hall (1911 – 1914). He later became Chairman of the East Anglia District where he was popularly known as 'The Non-Conformist Bishop of East Anglia'. He became the second President of the National Brotherhood Federation in 1908 and served the Wesleyan Methodist Conference as its Assistant Secretary for 13 years, as Secretary for five years and in 1922 was made President. His presidential year was one of distinction and was marked by widespread evangelical revival. He died suddenly during his ex-Presidential year at Castleford, Yorkshire, on 4th September 1923.

John's obituary in the Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference 1924, describes him as a man with a strong physique and powerful voice; a man of unflinching courtesy who particularly related to the suffering poor. He was a generous colleague, a trusted and well loved leader, a successful open air preacher and above all, an Evangelist. He had a great presence in the pulpit where every sermon reflected his passion for his Lord and Master and his love for the people. In East Anglia he gave great encouragement to rural communities and struggling circuits and his advice and help was frequently sought by Anglicans and Free Churchmen alike.

1914 - 1938 Rev Dinsdale T Young

Dinsdale was born at Corbridge on Tyne, Northumberland in 1861. He was accepted for the Wesleyan Methodist Ministry in 1879, training at Headingley College, before entering his ministerial career in 1882. He served in four London Circuits, in Birmingham, York, Manchester and Edinburgh before being appointed Superintendent Minister of Central Hall Westminster in 1914 – a post which he was to hold for 23 years. He was elected President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1914.

Dinsdale had a commanding presence in the pulpit with his powerful and melodious voice and was a man who lived what he preached. The

central truths of the gospel were his constant theme. He was never known to speak unkindly of any man.

Not only was he gifted as a preacher, he was a popular lecturer, supporter of good causes, a respected writer and most able of administrators. He travelled over 10,000 miles a year preaching and lecturing to congregations large and small throughout Wesleyan Methodism and in many pulpits of other churches and societies. He was still actively ministering to his beloved Central Hall when he died on January 21st 1938 at the age of 77.

1938 - 1939 Rev Frederick Luke Wiseman

Luke Wiseman was born in York in 1858, a son of the Manse. He was accepted for the Wesleyan Methodist Ministry in 1879 and trained at Didsbury College, entering his ministerial career in 1881. From then until his death on January 16th 1944, he was a minister in full work. Luke had the rare distinction of being President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1912 and being the second President of the Methodist Conference after unification of the three main branches of Methodism in 1932. For 26 years he was Superintendent. Minister of the Birmingham Mission from 1887 – 1913 and then became the Secretary of the Home Missions Department of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, a post which he held for more than 20 years. From 1913 until his death in 1944, he was a Trustee of Westminster Central Hall.

In 1937 he became Superintendent Minister of Central Hall following the death of Dinsdale Young and held that post until 1939 when W E Sangster was appointed by the Conference. An evangelist, orator, elder statesman and gifted musician, Luke travelled widely as a Home Missionary and was a preacher of great conviction and confidence reflecting his joy as a 'Gospeller'. As a Trustee of Central Hall, he had a great influence in the development of the Organ in the Great Hall and encouraged the Central Hall organists, particularly Arthur Meale and Arthur Harris.

1939 - 1955 Rev William Edwin Sangster

William was born in London into a non-Methodist family, but came into Methodism from attending Radnor Street Sunday School. He was accepted for the Wesleyan Methodist Ministry after serving in the Royal West Surrey Regiment during the latter years of World War I. He trained at Handsworth and Richmond Colleges and served at Bognor, Colwyn Bay, Bootle, Scarborough and Leeds before being appointed by Conference to be Superintendent Minister of Central Hall Westminster in 1939. He was minister of Central Hall for 16 years during which

time he served as President of the Conference in 1950. In 1955 he became General Secretary of the Home Mission Department, but had to retire in 1959 due to a progressive muscular illness that led to his early death on Wesley Day, May 24th 1960.

William was an outstanding preacher who drew large congregations wherever he preached filling Central Hall on many occasions during his ministry. He was a remarkable pastor who lived in the small flat in Central Hall during the war years so that he could minister to the hundreds of people who took shelter in the Central Hall basement for over 1,000 nights. He was a prolific writer and chaired meetings with wit, eloquence and humanity and was an inspiration to all who visited him during his final debilitating illness.

1955 - 1964 Rev Derrick A Greeves

Derrick was born at Bowden in Cheshire on June 29th 1913 to a family of Methodist Ministers. He trained for the Methodist Ministry at Wesley House, Cambridge and served at Barnet, Bristol (Redland), South Norwood and London Finsbury Park before being appointed Superintendent Minister of Central Hall Westminster in 1955, in succession to Rev W E Sangster. He was minister at Central Hall for nine years before moving on to Guildford, Worcester and Salisbury. In 1978 he became an active supernumerary in the Kirkoswold Circuit and enjoyed 13 years of semi-retirement there until his death on 14th March 1991.

During the Second World War, Derrick was an RAF Chaplain from 1943 – 1945 during which time he became a frequent broadcaster. He later became a religious adviser to both the BBC and ITV. Many of his talks and sermons were published.

As minister at Central Hall, he was a skilled preacher, and proclaimer of the gospel, a practical pastor and tremendously supportive of his colleagues. He was a man of great energy and warm humanity and is still remembered with great affection.

1964 - 1980 Rev Maurice Barnett

Maurice was born in Crewe on March 21st 1917 into a Methodist family. On leaving school, he spent a year at Cliff College in Derbyshire before training for the Methodist Ministry at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester. Most of his ministry was spent in Central Mission Halls – East Ham, Bristol (Bishopton) and Bradford (Eastbrook) before his appointment as Superintendent Minister of Westminster Central

Hall in 1964 in succession to Rev Derrick Greeves. He died suddenly on 9th April 1980 in his 16th year as minister of Central Hall.

During his ministry at Central Hall, Maurice finally cleared the debt that Central Hall had carried since its opening in 1912 and instigated a major refurbishment scheme. He was first and foremost an evangelist, a pastor and missionary. His preaching ministry led him to preach as far a field as the USA, Australia and Fiji, as well as at Cliff College Anniversary weekends and at many missions.

A great ecumenist, Maurice developed close links with Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral and The Houses of Parliament which his successors continue to broaden.

Maurice wrote a number of books and for his thesis 'Holiness and its Social Implications' he was awarded a PhD by Sheffield University. He was also a gifted organist and was made an Honorary Fellow of the London College of Music in 1973.

1980 - 1981 Rev Irvonwy Morgan

Irvonwy was born at Trefeglwys, Montgomeryshire on 11th April 1907. A son of the Manse, he was educated at Kingwood School, Bath. He candidated for the Wesleyan Methodist Ministry and trained at Wesley House, Cambridge, being the first non-graduate to train there. There he gained a first class honours degree in Theology. While at Cambridge, he played Rugby for the University – later he played for London Welsh.

His whole ministry was London based. He served in the London Mission in Poplar and Bow from 1932 – 1951. In 1951 he became Secretary of the London Mission Extension Fund and was responsible for planning the rebuilding of many Methodist Churches destroyed during the Blitz. He was expert in breaking through red tape and bureaucracy and was astute in appointing the right people to the right job. As a preacher and writer he was highly regarded. His preaching appointments covered the UK and took him to the USA and Australia. In 1967 he was elected President of the Methodist Conference and in 1972 was Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council. For many years he was Chairman of the Greater London Churches Council Executive Committee and also Chairman of the Bible Lands Society. He retired in 1979 only to become 'minister in charge' at Central Hall Westminster, following the sudden death of Rev Maurice Barnett in 1980 and more than held the fort until Rev John Tudor was appointed to the Superintendency in 1982.

Irvonwy died less than a month after handing over to John Tudor, on September 24th 1982. He was a man of intellectual and moral integrity, a man of vision, an outstanding financial administrator and a man whose natural sense of humour won him friends where he went.

1981 - 1995 Rev Richard John Tudor

John was born in Northampton in 1930, a son of the Manse and was accepted for the Methodist Ministry after serving in the RAF (1948 – 51). His stations have been at East Ham (1954 – 57), Thornton Cleveleys, Blackpool (1957 – 60), and as Superintendent Minister at Derby Methodist Mission (1960 – 71); Coventry Methodist Mission (1971 – 75); Brighton Dome Methodist Mission (1975 – 1981) and Methodist Central Hall, Westminster (1981 – 1995).

In 1981, John was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Divinity by the Wesleyan University, Fort Worth, having earlier been made an Honorary Texan in 1965 and a Freeman of Fort Worth in 1970.

John 'sat down' in 1995 and retired to Brighton where he has continued to pursue his hobbies of cooking, photography and his especial recreation, the delights in family life.

During his 14 year Ministry at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, John was a great preacher, administrator and innovator. He has a special care for this great monumental building and oversaw the re-leading of the dome and the external cleaning of the building, internal decoration of the building including the Great Hall as well as many other improvements.

A great innovator, John started the Annual Daffodil Day Rallies in 1982 in conjunction with Network and to which Dame Thora Hird was a regular visitor. John was the first Methodist Minister to say House of Commons Daily Prayers (Speaker Sir Bernard Weatherill), the first Methodist to be the Chaplain to the Lord Mayor of Westminster. He, with David Wiltshire MP, was the first to initiate and hold the Annual Methodist Covenant Service in the Undercroft Chapel of the Palace of Westminster. Together with Father Michael Seed and the Very Rev Michael Mayne, the Dean of Westminster Abbey, he instigated the Good Friday Crucifixion Procession on Victoria Street.

1995 - 2000 Rev Dr Peter C Graves

The son of Walter and Eileen Graves, of Blackheath in SE London, Peter was born on 23rd March 1943 in Bromley Kent. He is the eldest of five children. After two years as an Executive Officer in the Civil Service he was accepted as a candidate for the Methodist Ministry and trained at Handsworth College, Birmingham from 1963-7. He then gained a scholarship from the World Council of Churches for study at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia gaining the degree of Master of Theology in 1968 and a doctorate in 1974.

He began his circuit ministry in September 1968 in the Enfield Circuit, and after ordination in 1969, served three years as minister of Holly Park Church in the Highgate Circuit. After part time service as Chaplain of Enfield College of Technology, he became Ecumenical Chaplain and Lecturer at the newly formed Middlesex Polytechnic in 1972 serving in a full-time capacity. In 1979 he returned to Circuit work, serving some of the largest churches in Methodism – Epsom, and Cullercoats before Westminster and then Wesley Church Cambridge where again he was involved in student work.

Peter served Westminster at a time of great transition. The connexional offices moved to Marylebone Road and many changes were needed both in the life of the congregation and in the use of the premises. He paved the way for future growth and development in every area of the work of Central Hall, but his main contribution to the life of the church was the development of its spiritual life and ministry.

A caring pastor and dynamic preacher he sought to clearly show the relevance of Biblical teaching to contemporary life. A gifted teacher, he was ever concerned to help Christians know what they believed and why. Only then would they have confidence to share the faith with others. The development of midweek services and the Disciple Bible study programme helped further this aim, as did his weekly broadcasts on Premier Radio and his published writing.

Deeply committed to evangelism and outreach he also wanted to show the relevance of the gospel to every area of life including social and political matters. To that end, he sought to work in partnership both ecumenically and with wider Methodism to ensure that the witness of the church touched the widest possible constituency.

He was a firm believer in the importance of developing a multi ethnic ministry and rejoiced at the wide variety of national backgrounds represented in the life of Central Hall, both in the regular congregation and its many international visitors.

Throughout his ministry he has been ably supported by his wife Tricia and the couple have three grown children, Matthew, Luke and Eleanor.

Superintendent Ministers Since 2000

2000 - 2001 Rev Dr Malcolm White

2001 - to date Rev Martin H Turner

Resources:

1. Obituaries in the Minutes of Conference

Reminiscences of the ministries of any of the above either at Central Hall or in other stations would be most welcome.