

Dr Elizabeth Henry and colleagues
via e-mail

17 December 2021

Dear Dr Henry, Mr James, Fr Moughtin-Mumby,
Canon Nsenga-Ngoy, and co-signatories,

On behalf of Clergy Support Trust, we are grateful to have the opportunity to respond to your letter, received on 16 December, regarding the appointment of Theresa May as an Honorary Vice-President of the Trust.

Thank you for sharing so openly your feelings about this appointment and, importantly, how this has been perceived by some fellow clergy and those you are representing. The lived experiences of clergy, which we are privileged to hear every day, including the most painful and traumatic, are at the heart of the Trust: we are always eager to learn and to do better, and to hear from anyone who wishes to work alongside us in those aims. In that spirit, and while we understand that you may wish to publish your letter, we wonder whether we might achieve more together by meeting and discussing your concerns, and working to find ways in which the Trust – valued as it is by clergy of all backgrounds, and essential as it is to the wellbeing of so many – might better support clergy of Global Majority Heritage. We say this at the outset of our response, as we believe that such dialogue and partnership is the most valuable way of improving what we do.

In terms of Mrs May's appointment, this is one of five announced recently; the others include Marsha De Cordova (a GMH MP from the opposing party to Mrs May's), and three other Parliamentarians, all of whom have distinct and special ties to the Church of England, including as a self-supporting priest and as a clergy spouse. In making these appointments, the Trust has been guided by its overarching aim to do whatever it can to help as many families as possible. As well as their specific perspectives on the Church and the charity, we hope that all five appointees will bring a range of skills, experiences and passions to the Trust as we seek to help even more people. Hearing from a range of people from across the Anglican Church is critical for our continued growth and development, not least at this time where there are more applications for support than ever before, and when our usual programme of engagement has needed to be paused for so long.

Our grants and services – of which we are privileged to offer thousands each year – are available to applicants of every ethnicity, gender, orientation, ability, background, theological perspective, and political persuasion. We believe that inclusivity must be not only at the heart of the Church's values, but of our own efforts to serve those who spend their lives serving others. Indeed, we believe that the greatest progress is made in truly building the Kingdom – and in helping the clergy doing that to thrive – when we appreciate the gifts and perspectives of many. Currently, those efforts include funding research on the wellbeing of GMH

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clergy, on which we have been fortunate to work closely with a diverse group of colleagues.

In light of the direct questions in your letter, we would like to make clear that Vice-Presidents – though of great value to the Trust – have no official role, beyond supporting us to promote the charity to the widest possible audience. They will not, in these roles, be involved in the strategic leadership of the charity. They will have no role in the administration of grants or services, and will have no access to the details of any applicants to the charity. Indeed, and in a model which we believe reflects best practice, application decisions are not made, as your letter suggests, by those with considerable power or wealth, but by dedicated and compassionate charity staff whose first priorities are independence and confidentiality. Cases are rarely escalated to Trustees for decision (and then only subject to the strictest and most confidential controls) and never to Vice-Presidents (who are not Trustees). The implication in your letter that the Trust is somehow ‘above’ those it seeks to serve is disappointing, particularly given recent efforts to modernise both our brand and our approach, but we welcome the opportunity to clarify this. Like your own group, the charity’s leadership includes those in parish roles (including both the Senior Treasurer and Chief Executive) who serve alongside the sisters and brothers we seek to support through the Trust. In recent years, we have worked hard to increase the diversity of our Board of Trustees (on which Vice-Presidents do not sit); this work will continue to be a key aspect of our strategic vision going forward.

We appreciate that no appointment will ever draw universal praise, and we have no intention to offend any of the remarkable clergy the Church is blessed with – indeed, they are the reason for our existence and for the work we do. We wish to remain a charity which is truly inclusive, and which draws upon the experiences of all those who can make a positive difference to what we do. We believe Mrs May to be such a person, and hope to work positively with her, you and others to ensure that we support clergy and their families as fully as possible. We are always eager to learn from our sisters and brothers in ministry, and welcome the opportunity for dialogue with all clergy, and anybody else, who wishes to help us do more and do better. In this spirit, may we end by reiterating our desire to meet, so that we can learn from your considerable expertise and better serve the many outstanding clergy across this country who spend their lives serving others?

With thanks again, and all best wishes,



The Revd Canon Simon Butler
Senior Treasurer (Chair of Trustees)



The Revd Ben Cahill-Nicholls
Chief Executive