

The Friends of the City Churches ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS Review of the Year 2012-13

The Executive Committee is pleased to report once again another busy and successful year for the Friends. All elected members of the Executive Committee are Trustees, meeting monthly during the year. Simon Gregor, the Secretary has unfortunately had to resign as he is increasingly involved with a project about the forthcoming centenary of World War I. He has served the committee and the FCC well in the short term he was with us and we are very grateful to him and for his offer to continue to be available for discrete projects.

Amber Raney-Kincade has volunteered to help us develop our social media output and this is already attracting significant public interest. John Cornwell who was elected to the committee in 2012 sadly died during the year and we were sorry to lose his expertise. Quite how much that might have been was apparent at his funeral service at Christ Church Spitalfields when the wealth of his talents was revealed to all in the congregation.

As will be seen from the Treasurer's report, we have received significant gifts and legacies which we have effectively ring-fenced to ensure they are used for appropriate worthy purposes. The Committee has been advised that the governance of the charity is more appropriately placed in a new vehicle: a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and a resolution to that effect is being brought to this year's AGM.

Membership

There has been a steady trickle of new members over the past few months and on 31 March our total membership was 1,120. Membership fees have been kept at current levels in view of the present economic environment and we hope that this will encourage existing members to stay with us and that we will continue to attract new members. This increases the pool of people coming forward as volunteers. There is never a shortage of opportunities so if you think you may be able to help in any way at all please contact the office.

Administration

Karen Chester resigned as part-time administrator partly due to difficulty commuting to our office from her narrowboat. We missed her warm smile and friendly public face to our members and those whom we serve in the City. Alice Yates kindly stepped into the breach for a six month contract which has been extended following expected changes in the office arrangements. We are very grateful for her calm competence. Alice is normally in the office part-time on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: when she is not there the answerphone takes messages on 020 7626 1555; this is regularly cleared.

Accommodation

This is probably the most time-consuming area that the committee has addressed during the year but we now have a plan of action that will ensure that we have a prominent base in a City church, St Mary Abchurch, ensuring that one of the churches that had limited opening hours is now open every weekday. Formal pastoral reorganisation is now underway for St Mary Abchurch to be a Chapel of Ease in the parish of St Stephen Walbrook. This process will take some time so, in the interim, we occupy it under the Bishop's Mission Order. Work is underway to ensure that the building is in a fit state for occupation, safe and secure.

Church Watching

We now provide volunteer Church Watchers for sixteen City churches, enabling them to open when otherwise they might have to be closed. Watching was temporarily suspended at All Hallows London Wall but has now resumed. We continue to Watch at St Mary Aldermary on Saturdays. We will also be requiring extra Watchers at St Mary Abchurch to fulfil our obligation to keep the church open every weekday. We have over one hundred Watchers to staff our current rotas and we take this opportunity of thanking them most sincerely for their contribution and unfailing enthusiasm. Anyone who feels they could undertake this duty is very welcome to apply to join the group and we encourage them to do so. Please contact David Salter, who currently runs this part of our activity. We must thank David for his superb organisation of the Watchers as he will be relinquishing this role at the end of 2013. We continue to be associated with Open House Weekend in the City in September, and this works well. By providing Watchers where necessary we help to ensure that as many churches as possible are open.

Programme of Events

Walks. Throughout the year guided walks were organised for Friends round many of the City churches and gardens. Our thanks go to the volunteer guides who lead these walks, in particular Karen Chester, Tony Tucker, Tim Kidd and Spencer Williams. Paul Taylor also led some walks and it is with deep regret we learned of his death earlier in the year. His memorial service at St Bartholomew the Great was a reflection of how much he had served all manner of City organisations since his retirement. He was also a generous benefactor to the Friends.

The walks continue to be popular, and where the demand is particularly great we try to repeat the walk after a short interval. We have endeavoured to provide a fair way of allocating tickets if they are limited in number rather than "first come first served".

The **Chairman's Outing** in September was to Gloucestershire looking at Inglesham, Lechlade, St Lawrence; Eastleach Turville, Eastleach Martin, Fairford and Cricklade churches.

Visits and Lectures. Signe Hoffos has coordinated the provision of events and we have visited two livery halls and their associated churches; Apothecaries' Hall and St Andrew by the Wardrobe [including lunch in the Hall afterwards!], Vintners' Hall and St James Garlickhythe; and a repeat visit to the Chapels Royal at St James's. Good numbers attended a lecture on *Lost Churches of the City of London*. We plan to re-focus events to provide walks in the summer and lectures in the winter months this year.

Carol Service. This year's was held at St Dunstan in the West in December, led by the Area Dean, the Revd Oliver Ross. We all enjoyed the choir from Haberdashers' Askes' Hatcham College, traditional mulled wine and mince pies afterwards. We are grateful to Nancy Branson who continues to oversee its organisation.

Newsletters

Four newsletters were published during the year. The generosity of one of our members, Guy Donaldson, ensures that we can use First Class post. Meanwhile, Judy Stephenson not only writes regularly for the newsletter but has been very successful in seeking advertising income to help defray costs. Thanks also go to Hellena Cleary, Brian Evans and Paul Holmes for their regular contributions during the year.

Merchandise

We introduced a new colourway for our popular ties. Tony Tucker's Guide has been updated again. We have considerable stocks of previous year's cards still available and no decision has yet been made about a 2013 card design.

City Events

This remains very popular, both in paper form and through the special *City Events* website (<http://www.cityevents.co.uk>), overseen by John Reynolds and Ingrid Slaughter.

Website

The upgrading of the website has now been completed by Jim Batty and overseen through the changes by David Jessop. It now has a regular monthly update and is widely admired. We are conscious that some issues re church openings and services are not up to date but this is usually the responsibility of the individual churches. We have a link with the Area Deanery website which helps address this (www.citydeanery.org.uk).

We keep in close touch with the Archdeacon's office throughout the year, and enjoy a worthwhile exchange of views on matters affecting the churches.

Finally I must record the sincere thanks of the FCC to the Bishop of London, the Archdeacon and the Area Dean, for yet another year of unfailing support and understanding. At the same time, my thanks go to all the volunteers who work so hard for the Friends, to whom any success we achieve is due.

Oliver Leigh- Wood
Chairman
May 2013