

The Friends of the City Churches

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Review of the Year 2011-12

The Executive Committee is pleased to report once again another busy and successful year for the Friends. The elected members of the Executive Committee, all Trustees, have been fully occupied. The Committee meets monthly during the year.

Melvyn Jeremiah retired as Honorary Secretary on 31 December 2011. He has been a valuable support for a number of years and had brought our governance and working practices into the 21st century and was an effective liaison officer with the parishes and the Archdeaconry. The Vice Chairman has been acting as Secretary until a new person is appointed, we hope, at this meeting. It is clear that Melvyn did far more than we ever understood and for that we will always be grateful. A separate presentation to him has taken place.

Tom Pearson will not be standing for re-election, after two years service on the Committee because of increasing commitments at his workplace. We thank him for his contribution, and we are delighted to say that he has offered to support us with our web redesign and marketing. We have been pleased to welcome as co-opted members Mary Milne-Day, who has taken the Befrienders' portfolio and John Cornwell who is looking at our links with the livery companies.

Following last year's agreement to changes to the governance of the charity, the new system of three year terms for EC members commences at this year's Annual Meeting. To start the process, lots have been drawn so as near as possible a third of the Committee are being elected (or re-elected) each year.

Membership

There was a reduction in paid up memberships during the year which may partly be attributed to a change in how we sought subscriptions from those paying by cheque. One of our key objectives remains to increase membership numbers as much as possible. In the meantime we are grateful to those members who donate additional sums as these are particularly welcome in the present climate.

Administration

Karen Chester continues her sterling work as Office Administrator. We are most grateful to her for her loyalty and unfailing cheerfulness.

Accommodation

We are not yet ready to report a successful outcome to our continuing fruitful discussions about our future office arrangements. This matter will be given a high priority during the coming year.

Church Watching

St Martin Ludgate has now re-opened and we now Watch at the Dutch Church, Austin Friars twice monthly. We continue to review the activity at our Watched churches to ensure best use of our volunteers: more are always needed. Clarification of the membership subscription reduction for Watchers has been approved. We always welcome new Watchers to replace those retiring or moving away and to augment our pool as we provide Church Watchers for 16 City churches, enabling them to open when otherwise they might have to be closed. 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 manages this vital part of our activity.

Programme of Events

Walks. Following falling numbers on our own City Churches Walks Day(s), we attempted to join these with the City of London's Festival but were unsuccessful. Two walks were organised at short notice to replace them during the festival dates but we were not able to reach out to non-members as we had originally hoped. We continued our participation in the Open City (House) Weekend in September, once again liaising with organisers of this event.

Throughout the year several guided walks round many of the City churches and gardens were organised for Friends. Our thanks go to the volunteer guides who lead these walks, in particular Karen Chester, Tony Tucker, Sue Gane, Tim Kidd and Paul Taylor as well as Gabrielle Leigh-Wood who took a group as far as the Olympic Park! The walks are greatly enjoyed by those

who take part. They are popular and nearly always fully booked, and where the demand is particularly great we try to repeat the walk after a short interval. My day tour in September was this year focused on Sheerness and its docks and was much enjoyed.

Signe Hoffos also organised visits to the *Hajj* and *Treasures of Heaven* exhibitions at the British Museum and the King James Bible exhibition at Lambeth Palace Library. Visits were also arranged to Apothecaries' Hall, Vintners' Hall and its associated church of St James Garlickhythe, and the Chapels Royal at St James's. We undertook to promote and provide ticketing facilities for Tony Tucker's talk on City Organs at St Botolph Aldgate, on behalf of the Concordia Foundation- a charity of the Lady Mayoress- which helped raise our profile. A celebration of the life of Lancelot Andrewes and his contribution to the King James Bible was led by The Revd Katharine Rumens at St Giles Cripplegate where he had been her predecessor. (We have noticed that September events do not attract the numbers that other month's events do and we will bear this in mind for further timetabling.) Our annual New Members' days are very useful and enjoyable and often lead to offers of help for which we are grateful.

The annual Carol Service was held at St Katharine Cree. The church was full, and we had a warm welcome from the Priest in Charge who is also the Area Dean, The Revd Oliver Ross. We all enjoyed the traditional mulled wine and mince pies afterwards.

Newsletters

Four newsletters were published during the year. We're extremely grateful for the generosity of one of our members, Guy Donaldson, who has contributed the entire cost of first class postage for the newsletters.

Merchandise

Sales of our limited range of merchandise (mugs, ties, Tony Tucker's Guide, and Christmas cards) continue at a modest level. The 2011 Christmas cards were a mixed success with those of Tony Tucker's design selling out, but the repeat order of the Charities Advisory Trust's *Wren's spires* sold poorly and will need to be marketed outside our membership to clear unsold stock. Tony Tucker has produced a small black and white summary booklet of the City churches complete with suggested walks, commissioned and funded by the Archdeaconry to help publicise the City churches in this Jubilee and Olympic year. They are free in churches although it is hoped that donations will be proffered. We are confident that this publication will increase interest in our churches.

City Events

City Events remains very popular, both in paper form and through the special *City Events* website (<http://www.cityevents.co.uk>). The website also has details of Watched churches, weekend services in the City, and events at churches just outside the City boundary. Melvyn Jeremiah has now resigned as Editor and we thank him for his long service. John Reynolds has taken over the editorial pen and he and Ingrid Slaughter (whom we warmly welcome) now work together on the typesetting and designing. We are grateful to the team of volunteers who distribute these around the City.

Befriending the churches

This scheme is presently under review. We are grateful to those active Befrienders who continue to support us and their churches.

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, and to whom any success we achieve is due.

Oliver Leigh Wood
Chairman

June 2011