



**Friends of Coventry Cathedral
Annual General Meeting
Held in the Lecture Hall, Coventry Cathedral
2pm, Sunday 26th September, 2010**

1. **Prayer**

The Chairman, Peter Woodward, welcomed 49 members to the 75th Annual General meeting of the Friends of Coventry Cathedral and opened the meeting using the Friends prayer.

2. **Apologies**

16 Friends sent apologies. Details recorded and held by the Secretary.

3. **The minutes of the 2009 AGM**

The minutes from this meeting, held on September the 27th 2009, were presented to the meeting.

Observations were invited.

At Page 3 under the heading 'Open Forum' it was requested that we should change the word 'was' to 'is' in describing Barbara Mobbs's service as a tireless worker. The minutes were approved.

The minutes from the 2009 AGM were signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

4. **Election of Officers and New Members**

Denise Hiscox, Treasurer to the Friends, has notified the Council of her intention to stand down after the 2010 AGM due to impending retirement and a move to Northumberland.

Adrian Williams was nominated by Margaret Lloyd and seconded by Brenda Stokes as her successor. This was agreed unanimously and Adrian was elected to the post of Treasurer.

A vacancy on Council had been filled since the previous 2009 AGM by Jain Galliford, as a co-opted member. She was nominated by Martin Williams and Seconded by John Brassington as a full member of the Council.

This was agreed unanimously.

Peter Woodward agreed to continue as Chairman, Helen McGowan as Membership and General Secretary and Mike Stansbie as Vice-Chair. Carried unanimously.

5. **Treasurers Reports**

Denise Hiscox presented the **Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2009**. These have been approved and examined by David Spafford, the independent auditor. Grateful thanks were recorded to David for his invaluable help. Denise also added that David was willing to continue in his role as auditor and he makes no charge for his services.

The investment income was again down and this trend is likely to continue.

Denise also presented a summary for 2010 so far noting that the Weight estate had improved the income figure in 2009 and 10 as the legacy was paid in three separate instalments.

It was noted that all events and activities since the previous AGM continue to make a profit.

Questions were invited from the floor.

A question was asked about investment income and whether certain building societies might offer better rates of interest. It was confirmed that our charitable status affects our eligibility to invest in certain circumstances.

It was suggested that the Charities Aid Foundation might be a source of advice and ideas for investment income also.

Peter Woodward thanked Denise for her hard work, yet again, in producing clear and sound reports. He congratulated her on her retirement and offered the best wishes of all The Friends as she moves away to Northumberland. He presented her with Garden Vouchers as a parting gift. Denise responded by saying that she had enjoyed the task very much and had found it rewarding and satisfying!

6. **Secretary's Report**

"I am very pleased to be able to deliver a report full of good news and positive growth. Since I took on this role back in 2008 it has been a pleasure to serve such a committed and generous group of people. I often receive little notes from members, especially those from far away, who have no regular contact with a place that has inspired them. Little snippets of information are shared about their time here as members of the community. They are often elderly and not able to make our meetings and events, but they remain connected with Coventry Cathedral through this wonderful network. I feel very privileged, as someone who has only been around for 25 years, to be able to do this work on your behalf.

"The positive feedback I receive from those who do attend our talks and interesting events demonstrate that the interest and commitment to this place is alive and kicking.

"We are able to communicate in so many ways now with you our members. The World Wide Web and e-mail means that we can have an immediate relationship with those of you who are able to receive our electronic messages. The website is a real credit to us.

"The newsletter is very popular and we would love to hear from those of you who have memories or contributions to make. I know that Ted Hiscocks will be updating us later on the People's Story, and stories are what make our Cathedral so interesting. If you stumble across anything do let us know, and if you have ideas for articles do share them with us.

"I would like to pay a personal tribute to Denise Hiscox, our Treasurer, who has been meticulous in everything she has produced. She has allowed those of us with poor numeric skills to sit back with confidence knowing that the money – and that is such an important part of our work – has been taken care of in such a conscientious way. We'll miss her very much, but she remains a Friend and Life member so she can't entirely escape. We send her our love, deep gratitude and our very best wishes as she embarks on a new life Up North!

"Membership has once again grown – in 2008-2009 we recruited 41 new members and since the last AGM we have 76 new Friends on our books. This is almost a 100% improvement in just one year as far as membership goes and we can only hope that this is a trend. So we have 159 lifers and 257 Annual members, **a grand total of 416**. We are a truly global family and can boast Friends in far flung corners of the world! But we sadly heard of the death of two of our members this year, Rachel Wroth and Lois Batten.

"Please continue to encourage others to join us, those who you know who have a passion for this place, and do bring them to events so they can see us in action and experience our friendship and fellowship for themselves.

"Thank you all so much for your continuing invaluable support. We can't do any of this without you."

7. **Chairman's Report**

Thank you to all of you who have joined us today for the 76th AGM of the Friends of Coventry Cathedral. At the outset I would like to record my own special thanks to Helen McGowan (Secretary) and Denise Hiscocks (Treasurer) for the time and effort they have put in to keep everything in order during a period of growth and development in the Friends. Thanks also to all members of Council. It's great to have such a supportive and committed group of people helping in so many ways to make the Friends an increasingly confident and progressive organisation, serving its members and the Cathedral. By now I hope you will have absorbed as much of the 2009 Annual Financial Report as you want to. We have also just received Denise's latest financial update and Helen's membership update. In my report I would like to offer some reflections on activities over the 12 months since the last AGM.

When I first took on this role in 2008, our membership had dropped below 300. Today we have 416 full and life members. This includes a net increase of 76 in the last year alone. So we are certainly heading in the right direction. In addition we have introduced a new category of 'Associate Membership' and extended it to the network of parish-based Cathedral Liaison officers. This brings the total to over 500, which is encouraging news. Thank you to all the new members for making that commitment and to all our existing members who have stayed with us and maybe have nudged others to join. Pleased keep doing it, word of mouth is the best sales pitch - we value every member.

Our finances are now in very sound order, with positive income from subscriptions, fundraising appeals and events. Income from all sources, large and small, all adds up. Even our 'cash for cans' aluminium can recycling effort has just netted another 70 pounds for 7,500 cans (and it makes a statement that we care about the environment). In 2009 we were also blessed with a significant bequest from former member Edith Weight. Legacies make a huge difference to us and the Cathedral and form the backbone of significant income for most other Cathedral Friends organisations.

We continue to exercise good management in all financial matters. We are making grants for Cathedral projects at an unprecedented level, whilst also steadily building our reserves to an acceptable level in order to ensure our medium term health.

Over the last 12 months we have committed or made grants totalling 17,500 pounds towards a number of excellent projects: the re-upholstery of leather kneelers and benches in the Chancel and chapels, new Litany of Reconciliation leaflets and a notice board in the ruins; repair of the doors in the Haigh Chapel, new Christmas tree lights, support towards the 70th Anniversary performance of War Requiem in November and new robes for the Guild of Servers. Every member has helped us make this level of support for real projects possible. Thank you for your generosity. Be reassured – every penny is well used and is making a real difference.

We still await the outcome a major grant application to fund the renewal of the unique 'Piper Consecration Vestments'. The 2009 Robes Appeal to members fell well short of our ambitious target – a learning point for us. We will report the outcome as soon as we have more news. I am particularly pleased with the positive response to our programme of events. These are the lifeblood of the association and we have tried to reflect the interests and outlook of the Cathedral and our membership. We have organized ten major events over the last year. You will have your own favourites. Two have stood out for me from the past year. It was a special privilege to hear from Staffordshire stonemason Roy Burnett, part of the team of craftsmen who fashioned all the stones of our great Cathedral. It was good to honour these unsung heroes and to provide an occasion for Roy to donate the cabinet of original tools that is now proudly on display in the new Visitor's Centre.

Then on Easter Monday at short notice, The Friends hosted the visit of the Chamber Choir from the Frauenkirche in Dresden. Over 300 people flocked into the Cathedral to hear their wonderful singing. The finale was especially moving linking in the Roy Ray installation 'Where footsteps left no trace'. It certainly further cemented the enduring bond between our two great cities. It was an evening of true Friendship that will live long in my mind. All in all there is much for us to celebrate and much to look forward to as well. You may have read about Amici - yes it's Latin for Friends. This new choral ensemble was formed this year with the specific aim of taking the best of our choral music and images portraying the inspiration that is Coventry cathedral out to churches across the diocese linked to a message from the Friends. I would like to thank the 16 singers who have freely given their time and commitment to this venture and especially to Kerry Beaumont for his brilliant musicianship and encouragement. Amici has already donated 600 pounds to the Friends to support choral development and there's more to come.

So what of the next 12 months? Well we hope to organize a varied and sparkling programme of events; we expect to award grants to more projects that will make a special difference to Cathedral life; we will work hard to continue growing our membership. Dare we aim for 600 members by this time next year!

To conclude: we stand on the shoulders of giants whose vision, confidence and effort led to the creation of this extraordinary place. Today I see no reason why we cannot be just as bold as, step by step, we continue building a Friends Association worthy of Coventry Cathedral. Let's be confident, imaginative and seek to cultivate a true and open spirit of friendship – for with this attitude, all things are possible. For my part, I consider it a huge privilege to continue offering service in this wonderful place. Thank you.

8. **Open Forum**

Richard Chamberlaine Brothers updated the meeting on the progress of **The Peoples Story** – also known as The Jubilee Book.

The interviews have been recorded and are currently in the Cathedral Archives. The material generated from these interviews has enabled the authors of the separate chapters to write their contributions. These are almost all finished.

It is being edited by Christopher Lamb. The contract with the printer is yet to be agreed but it is hoped to be ready for the AGM in 2011. This is a project that the Friends have financially underwritten and all profits will be returned to them.

Access to the recorded reminiscences was discussed and it was suggested that these might be transcribed or the recordings made available in due course. Richard agreed to ask Ted Hiscocks about the possibility of this.

Paul Warren, Head Server, updated the meeting on the progress of the **servers robes**. He reported that several of the servers were making personal financial contributions towards these and there was also consideration of a new gold Festival set.

Pam Rossiter asked if the Friends could use the **War Requiem programme** to promote their activity. The meeting was advised that The Friends have made a contribution towards the marketing of this event and that the programme would have dedicated space to do just that.

John Scouller recommended the new '**Fire in Coventry**' book – a reprint of the original – and suggested that The Friends might promote sales of this on the Friends website.

Richard Chamberlaine Brothers reported the illness of John Wallis to the meeting and asked that the Council send a message of support to him on behalf of The Friends.

The meeting closed at 3.10pm.