



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th May 2023 at the Parish Church of St Cuthbert, Edinburgh

	Item	Comments
1	Devotions	The Convener (The Very Rev Andrew McLellan) opened the meeting with a reading and prayer.
2	Welcome and Apologies	A welcome was extended to all members, including those online (30), as well as Rev Dr Stewart Gillan, Minister of St Andrew's Jerusalem, and Trish Archibald, Scholar 2022. Apologies were received from 31 members.
3	Minutes of AGM 2022	
i	Approval	The Minutes, having been circulated prior to the meeting, were accepted as an accurate record, by those present, and approved.
ii	Matters arising	Tom Watson reported that he had investigated several Trusts linked to the Church of Scotland in relation to financial support for scholars. Many focus on educational aspects in Africa and Asia but none specifically for The Holy Land. He is still looking elsewhere but proposed that prospective scholars be directed to approach their universities in the first instance. Andrew McLellan reported that an initial approach to The Glasgow Society of The Sons and Daughters of Ministers of The Church of Scotland, following up on dialogue begun in 2018 to consider reinstating their support for the scholars, has proved promising.
4	Reports	Reports were pre-circulated, as part of the Annual Report and Accounts
i	Convener's report	Andrew expressed his thanks to the Committee for their enthusiasm and hard work and emphasised his pledge to commit them to the growth of The Friends – both in terms of numbers and the work and interest of The Friends.
ii	2022/2023 Accounts	The Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023, along with explanatory notes, had been circulated with the Annual Report. The members were informed that the Annual Accounts are approved and audited by The Church of Scotland. There were no further questions nor comments.
iii	St Andrew's, Jerusalem (Rev Dr Stewart Gillan)	Although there were no questions nor comments on his report, it was noted that there would be further opportunity to raise questions with Stewart following his talk, or over lunch. He was thanked for his report.
iv	St Andrew's Tiberias (Rev Muriel Pearson)	There were no questions nor comments on her report. Thanks were expressed to Muriel, in her absence, for her continuing contribution towards newsletters and Friends' meetings throughout the year as well as her devotion to the church and those with whom she works.
v	Middle East Secretary (Kenny Roger)	There were no questions nor comments on his report. Thanks were offered for his ongoing provision of links and guidance in his support of The Friends.

vi	Membership	<p>Carol Miller explained that the database relating to The Friends' membership has recently been transferred from the Church of Scotland and is being handled by 4 nominated committee members, approved by CoS, with respect to GDPR. Initiatives are well under way to analyse the membership with regard to increasing and sharing awareness, thereby extending the membership beyond those currently enrolled.</p> <p>It is also intended to invite annual members to consider a rolling standing order, given that Life Membership is no longer an option (as of 1st January 2023). Consideration of making a donation towards the work of The Friends is also encouraged.</p> <p>The membership as at 14th May 2023 stands at:</p> <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>252 (2022 : 266)</td> <td>(82 non-em; 170 email)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life</td> <td>185 (2022 : 214)</td> <td>(67 non em; 118 email)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Annual</td> <td>45 (2022 : 25)</td> <td>(6 non em; 39 email)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Associate</td> <td>22 (2022 : 27)</td> <td>(9 non em; 13 email)</td> </tr> </table> <p>Changes since September 2022: 24 new members: 8 Life @ £50 4 Annual @ £10 12 Annual @ £20 17 removed from the list, either deceased or 'gone away'.</p>	Total	252 (2022 : 266)	(82 non-em; 170 email)	Life	185 (2022 : 214)	(67 non em; 118 email)	Annual	45 (2022 : 25)	(6 non em; 39 email)	Associate	22 (2022 : 27)	(9 non em; 13 email)
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vii	Scholarships	<p>A welcome was extended to Trish Archibald, scholar 2022, who has just returned from two weeks in Israel/Palestine.</p> <p>Due to delays following the Covid restrictions neither George Sneddon nor Clarke Muir (scholars 2020) have been able to fulfil their awards.</p> <p>George has returned the £2,000 paid to him in 2020.</p> <p>Clarke has committed to repay the balance of funds not lost through forfeited airline and accommodation bookings.</p> <p>Information about the award for 2023 has been extensively distributed throughout the universities in Scotland.</p>												
viii	Partners	<p>The report was pre-circulated with the Annual Report and there were no questions nor comments. Andrew reminded members of the importance of listening to and supporting the partners of The Friends; Daoud Nassar's presence at the AGM underlines the strength of this connection.</p>												
ix	Communications	<p>The report was pre-circulated with the Annual Report; there were no questions nor comments. The value of regular activity on the Facebook page was stressed. Members are encouraged to submit, for consideration, anything they feel might be of interest to include.</p> <p>Walter Dunlop commented on the high quality of the Newsletter and that feedback from membership is one of encouragement; thanks were expressed to all for the hard work, time and energy involved producing such an informative and helpful publication. His hope for the future is that there would be greater response towards the production. Andrew McLellan echoed these thanks, in particular to Carol Miller for her input.</p>												
5	Business													
i	Election of the Committee	<p>Retirements Alexis Darg stepped down after 20 years; her experience and wisdom over the years were acknowledged by Andrew McLellan. She responded with thanks, highlighting the importance of St Andrew's Jerusalem in her life.</p> <p>Rev Sandy Forsyth – conflict with other responsibilities has precluded his continuation on the committee; he was thanked for his contribution over the past nine months.</p> <p>Re-election Jamie Erskine (vice-convener) and Jacky Harkness (Minutes Secretary) were unanimously re-elected, having declared their willingness to continue on the Committee.</p> <p>Proposal of new Members i Tom Watson worships at Corstorphine St Annes and has also visited The Holy Land. An accountant, he is ex-chairman of The Church of Scotland Trust. Over many years, his involvement was with development work, in a financial capacity, alongside Kenny Roger.</p>												

		<p>ii Trish Archibald has just returned from The Holy Land as a Friend's scholar and is finishing her Masters at Glasgow University. She starts her probationary period as a Minister at Baljaffray Parish Church in September.</p> <p>They were both unanimously elected.</p>
ii	Subscription	<p>Carol Miller reminded the members that the level of subscription is raised at each AGM, as written in the Constitution. In 2022 changes were agreed – as of 1st January 2023 Life Members would be discontinued, with Annual and Associate membership being raised to £20. Discussion relating to this change was undertaken.</p> <p>Points raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consideration should be given to increasing the fee given that not all regard £20 to be a lot of money • many are finding resources stretched • recruitment of young should also be considered when debating the level of subscription. <p>A straw poll to gauge the mood of the membership was undertaken by those present; a large number consider an increase would be acceptable.</p> <p>Andrew explained that although this is already being considered by the Committee, the response would be taken back to them for further discussion and a proposal would be raised at the AGM in 2024.</p>
		<p><i>At this point a welcome was extended to Daoud Nassar (Tent of Nations) and John Howard (Methodist Church), who had just joined the meeting. Andrew assured them that their presence was much appreciated by all those in the room, and how much those present, along with other guests, were looking forward to hearing them speak after lunch.</i></p>
6	Speakers	<p>Trish Archibald explained that it was hard to select topics to share. So she chose two projects, the first relating to her time at Sindyanna. As well as the importance of communication, she was impressed by their commitment to reconciliation and forgiveness, recognising common humanity, and to look ahead by clearing away rocks and plant, and tend for the future. The overwhelming value of taking time to listen to and present with people left her with the underlying impression of deep wisdom and hope. Her second week was spent at Wi-am in Bethlehem where she witnessed huge consideration, humanity and kindness in the midst of such difficult circumstances.</p> <p>She proffered her sincere thanks to The Friends for their generous award; without it, she would never have been able to go to Israel.</p> <p>Stewart Gillan, who finally arrived in Jerusalem in December, expanded on three attempts to gather experiences, as contained in his written report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events – since his arrival 3 Christmases; 2 Holy Weeks; 2 Eappi handover ceremonies and the testing of the Israel government through demonstrations in the streets. • 2 What is involved in the job description, shared with Muriel; visiting partners; a feeling of belonging, a sense of welcome and hospitality over hostility. • 3 An operational understanding of the terms 'antisemitism' and 'normalisation'. <p>Stewart then shared a variety of slides of his experience during Holy Week and finished by expressing the tension that St Andrew's was built as a war memorial and yet he is faced by the necessity to seek peace.</p> <p>Stewart was thanked by Andrew who referred to the importance of his work, and the value of the work that both he and Muriel do on behalf of us all.</p>

7	Future	
i	St Andrew's Day	<p>Edinburgh. Details were outlined relating to the Service in St Cuthbert's Church on 30th November at 2.00pm.</p> <p>Jerusalem. The representative in 2023 will be Maureen Jack, at no expense to The Friends.</p>
ii	Budget (draft) 2023/20224	<p>The draft budget was presented for reference. Tom Watson explained that it was for information as no formal approval is necessary. He outlined the future and how The Friends might move forward, particularly with the deficit that has continued over the past few years. Significant issues require to be addressed in the bigger picture, including membership fees, context of framework and what we do.</p> <p>Andrew thanked him and assured him that the committee looks forward to working alongside him.</p>
iii	Miscellaneous	<p>The possibility of The Friends organising a tour in 2024 is being considered. All members are encouraged to contact The Friends by email with any ideas.</p> <p>Rev Muriel Pearson will speak at St Matthews, Perth on 17th June, an event organised by Marjorie Paton as part of awareness of the World Day of Prayer 2024, which has been shaped by the Christian Palestinian women for Friday 1st March 2024.</p>
8	Vote of thanks	<p>On behalf of all members, Walter Dunlop thanked those who support the work of The Friends, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Convener for his strong leadership and enthusiasm • The Committee, the largest at 16 for a long time, demonstrating the distribution of expertise. • Those at the Church of Scotland, including Kenny Roger, Elaine Macadie and Dorothy McMonagle, who keep the wheels turning within 121 and who do so much for The Friends. • St Cuthbert's Church for providing the venue, the IT support and the hospitality. • Trish and Stewart who expanded eloquently on their written reports. He commented on Trish being a perfect example of the success of the scholarship programme. • Alexis Darg who joined the committee in 1997 and has been a personal friend since the 1980s when they were colleagues in Jerusalem. • Carol Miller for her work as The Secretary. <p>Andrew then thanked Dorothy McMonagle who has done so much of the administrative work of The Friends, behind the scenes, for her years' involvement as Keeper of The Records. Her devotion and eye for detail, along with her constant loyalty to The Friends, has been much appreciated and will be greatly missed. She was presented with a bouquet, on behalf of The Friends.</p>
9	Benediction	The meeting was closed by the Convener with the Benediction.