

Society of Friends of St. John's Cathedral, Portsmouth

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 1 December 2019

In St. John's Room, Cathedral of St. John

1. Welcome.

Gabriel Somorjay welcomed members.
Father PJ opened the meeting with prayers.

Apologise – Canon David Mahy

2. Minutes of the AGM 2018

Correction – Gabrielle Somorjay should read Gabriel Somorjay
Minutes of the AGM held on the 2 December 2018, previously published on the Cathedral website were approved. There were no matters arising. Proposed, Sylvia Somorjay. Seconded, Catherine Cassey

3. Chairman's Report

Reluctantly the Chair had nothing to report as the Friends have been dormant for the last year. Gabriel asked members to consider the mission of the Friends. Over the last three or four years the Society has purchased chairs for the Discovery Centre, audio-visual equipment for the Hall, a new thurible, new cotters, as well as contributing to the cost of the new choir stalls

Works on the Cathedral of a much bigger scale are looming, renewing the roof, complete rewiring, renewing the heating system. It is therefore, in all a likelihood that the costs will amount to over £1m. In the present circumstances, the Friends will be unable to fulfil its responsibility to "share the responsibility of important and ongoing maintenance of the building, and its enhancement with the Cathedral Dean, thus preserving it for future generations." It is most unlikely that the costs can be met by the parish, reported to be "the poorest in the diocese."

Three scenarios were offered:

1. To agree to "give up" and dissolve the Society of Friends.
2. We continue as is, doing nothing; but without a steady stream of new members, the Society will surely die out within the next decade or so, and the dwindling income will increasingly limit the scope of useful action.
3. We "step up" to the challenge. This will require us to dramatically "up our game", and raises the question: Are we and the Diocese up for it?

Those members present discussed the decline in membership. It was agreed that the demographics of Parish and the diocese have changed since its formation.

It was suggested that the Friends should look beyond the city and target other areas within the diocese and look at the desire for fraternity and the need to feel more connected with the aim of the Friends.

Leaflets need to be printed in multiple languages to make people more aware of the aims of the Friends. It was suggested that advice should be taken from someone with marketing expertise .

4. Membership secretary's report.

The current membership as of November 2019 is 49 members and 70 Life members.

5. Treasurer's report

A statement of accounts for the year ending 31 August 2019 was distributed.

The society received £1,986 in subscriptions, Gift Aid and donations.

Payments during the year totalled £1,374. This included payments for new chasubles, stationery, printing and postage. Closing balance as of 31 August 2019 was £5,421.

6. Dean's Report

Fr. PJ Smith, Dean of the Cathedral reported that it had been a very busy year. He expressed his grateful thanks to the staff and volunteers.

The new Dean of St. Thomas's Cathedral was welcomed.

The annual income from the Diocesan Collection for the Cathedral doubled as a result of designing envelopes with the key projects identified printed on them. Priests were sent a script and 2/3 inserts for newsletters. The cathedral has had standing orders set up as a result of this appeal.

A Contactless Giving Terminal has been put in the cathedral. This has produced a steady income from parishioners and visitors.

The Discovery Centre shop has been relocated. This has allowed for an additional space to be available for rent, providing an income stream.

A coffee machine has been put near the shop. There was not sufficient foot fall for a coffee shop.

The cathedral said farewell to Fr. Ansel as he has moved to Southampton. Fr. Emmanuel and Fr. Anthony have been welcomed to the parish.

Fr. PJ reiterated that he would not like to see the Friends close. There are major projects that will need to be done on the cathedral and the help of the Friends' will be important in this process.

There are people who can support the Friends in developing a strategy to promote it's aims and membership.

7. Election of Committee

Chairman- Gabriel Somorjay

Proposed, Catherine Cassey Seconded, John Short.

Secretary/Treasurer - Lesley Jones

Proposed, Catherine Cassey Seconded, John Short.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business..

8. Date of next AGM

29 November 2020 at 15.00 in the Discovery Centre, St. John's Cathedral.