

*In keeping with government guidelines on the COVID-19 pandemic, the Friends Council made the decision to hold the 2020 Friends AGM online this year by Zoom video call.*

## **1. Prayers & Welcome**

The Chairman, Canon Jonathan Brewster and the Very Reverend Dr David Ison, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, welcomed everyone to the 2020 Friends' Annual General Meeting and opened the meeting for the Cathedral and for the Friends, using the Friends' Prayer.

## **2. Minutes of the AGM held on 12th July 2019**

JB asked if there were any matters of accuracy. There were no matters arising.

## **3. Update from The Very Reverend Dr. David Ison, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral**

The Dean reported that in March 2020 it became very apparent that the Cathedral had little income due to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. St Paul's has started to focus on digital outreach in 2020. The Dean provided an overview of the Remember Me project, work on which began in April 2020 and was finished five weeks later thanks to generous support. This project is important for all to be able to mourn and remember those who they have lost. St Paul's also held a service to mark the end of National Grief Awareness Week, which saw the Dome being illuminated. This was the first special service in the Cathedral since early March. The Dean also relayed the work being done by St Paul's Adult Learning department, which includes a series of weekly reflections. St Paul's is also exploring the possibility of broadcasting services, which will require funding. St Paul's will be live streaming its first live online event on the 17<sup>th</sup> December, which will be A Celebration of Christmas, sponsored by Lloyds Bank. This is a positive move as online streaming allows for a bigger audience, and has led St Paul's to look at how we might incorporate more digital events in the future. The Dean explained that some St Paul's staff during 2020 were furloughed. As a result of loss of income, St Paul's had to undergo a system of restructuring resulting in redundancies; reducing staff by 25%. This restructuring was carried out with a projection of 700k visitors to the Cathedral in 2022/23. However, until St Paul's

receives these visitors it is bridging the financial gap by using its reserves and by the end of the year will have used £8m of its reserves. Prior to COVID-19 £5m of that had been set aside for an endowment fund and St Paul's will be using more of its reserves in 2021. In 2020 St Paul's received 132k visitors, resulting in a reduced income. To offset this, staff costs were and projects were cut bringing costs down to £700k a month. St Paul's is looking to fundraising to fill the remaining gap. So far St Paul's has received a £2.1m grant from National Heritage Lottery Fund and £320k from the DCMS for urgent repairs on the roof.

The Library Project is almost complete. The library should be reassembled by late Spring. The boarding house at the school is finished and the Choristers have moved in. There is still more work to be done on the class rooms. The Equal Access Project is still ongoing, with good progress being made. It should be finished by the end of January. St Paul's is also working to raise money to build an inner portico which will also serve as a memorial to all those that have died as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Canon Jonathan Brewster thanked the Dean and said that during this challenging time that prayers have been taking place online and that St Paul's has had to learn to adapt its provision of worship as a result of the Pandemic.

#### **4. Friends 2020 Highlights, update from Emma Tomlinson, Relationship Manager**

Emma Tomlinson reported that 2020 had certainly been an interesting and testing year for the Cathedral and the support provided by the Friends of St Paul's during this time has been invaluable.

The Friends is a vital source of income for the Cathedral. Income is generated through membership fees, additional donations on top of fees and legacies. This income is used to fund a Chorister bursary as well as provide a grant to The Schools and Family Learning Department, which fully funds the Department's Outreach Programme to young Londoners. The Friends also funds extensive conservation projects in the Cathedral, previously making grants to restoring the Stone Gallery as well as repaving the Whispering Gallery.

In the past decade, three Friends have given donations of over £10,000 to the Cathedral and 17 have made legacies; ranging from £10,000 to £300,000. Income generated from the Friends also pays for the organisation and running of the Friends itself, without which the Friends would cease to exist.

In recognition of the Friends support we typically hold various events throughout the year which provide us with the opportunity to come together as Friends and as community. Unfortunately, the unpredictability of 2020 led to all of our Friends events being cancelled. The Friends Lecture and Festival are booked and in the diary for 2021.

The St Paul's community came together in this year in a way not seen before; we came together online. This new and exciting way of engaging with one another enabled us all to feel connected even if we were unable to be physically present in the Cathedral.

St Paul's provided service sheets and online resources over the Easter weekend for a simple 'pray at home' service, that included links to sound and video files so that Friends could listen to the St Paul's Choir singing hymns and anthems.

In anticipation of the first lockdown, St Paul's organised schools across the country to take part in a 'Hymn Flashmob', inspired by videos of Italians singing from their balconies. The St Paul's Flashmob saw 70 schools take part, from local primary schools to Cathedral Choristers, recording videos of themselves singing their favourite songs, and offering them as musical gifts to those who were elderly, anxious or unwell.

The Choir of the Nation was then formed to aid St Paul's in its worship for major Feasts, including Palm Sunday, Easter, and Ascension Day. This choir united 300 people from China to Canada – truly a choir of the world.

In addition to this a performance of Quartet for the End of Time was streamed online from St Paul's in October offering Friends an opportunity for contemplation and reflection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In our latest Friends newsletter, we have created our very own digital advent calendar. As we entered the seasons of Advent, we offered 25 virtual windows, each with their own surprise.

St Paul's has also moved the St Paul's book club online, free for anyone and everyone to join. Details included in our latest newsletter.

ET said that for the first time St Paul's will be live streaming A Celebration of Christmas, so that Friends wherever they are can watch one of our most magical concerts from the comfort of their own homes.

St Paul's also launched Remember Me, an online book of remembrance for all who have died as a result of COVID-19. Five months on, over 6,000 people have contributed to the site in memory of a loved one and more names continue to be submitted every day. There are so many sad stories of those affected by the pandemic, with families who were unable to visit a dying relative or unable to come together to comfort or grieve. The messages from family, friends and carers on Remember Me remind us that people are more than statistics, that each one is valued, missed and worthy of remembrance.

From the activities mentioned it is clear that accessibility to Cathedral activities online have been vital throughout 2020 in making us feel connected to the Cathedral and to the St Paul's community.

And with the ongoing pandemic, Cathedral closures and with many of our community shielding at home for the time being, it is apparent that we need to move towards a more digital Friends offering.

This is more important now than ever before as the Friends of St Paul's Cathedral membership scheme will be a vital source of income for the Cathedral in the wake of low visitor numbers due to COVID-19.

Membership schemes are important for organisations because not only do annual membership fees provide a stable income for organisations but often additional donations are made by generous supporters on top of their existing fees, generating further income. Some organisations generate a third of their income through membership; for instance the Tate generate £12m per year.

Membership schemes have been crucial for many museums, galleries and other organisations during COVID-19 as visitor numbers have dropped. What is being seen across the sector is an increase in the creation of digital content for members to thank them for their loyalty and to ensure member retention. This is what we would like to do with the Friends of St Paul's.

It is not currently possible to sign up to become a Friend online and that she has been working with the Worshipful Company of IT, who have offered us their services pro bono, to create an online joining form so that new and existing Friends can enter their details more securely and efficiently. During lockdown the Friends team were unable to process applications due to not being able to access the office. Moving the entirety of the application process and membership card creation process, online will ensure that should there be another lockdown, prospective members will still be able to sign up for membership and receive their cards. The second part to the Friends digital plan is to provide online benefits to being a Friend.

The current benefits of being a Friend for £30 per year (£50 for individual plus guest) includes free entry to the Cathedral for the year, 10% discount in the shop, exclusive Friends events, quarterly email newsletter and reserved seating at several concerts/services. Apart from the newsletter all of the benefits mentioned were not available during lockdown.

With many people still isolating or shielding from COVID-19 many are unable to visit St Paul's despite it now being open and with another lockdown on the horizon it is important that a digital offering is provided in place of the physical benefits of membership.

Inspired by the Resource Hub created by Dr Paula Gooder during lockdown, ET said that we will be creating a Friends website. This page will include the membership sign up/renewal form and will also have a password protected area of the site. Only Friends will have access to this password. The password protected area of the site can include a message board so that Friends can still feel a part of a community even if they are not physically together. The site will also host exclusive Friends events online, including the live streaming of the annual Friends lecture, the AGM and more informal events such as coffee mornings.

We are hoping all of these changes will lead to a new and improved Friends of St Paul's, ready for whatever 2021 throws our way.

Jonathan Brewster added that the Cathedral is applying for further grant money for live streaming worship and events. There will also be a new Cathedral website in 9 months' time.

JB said that now would be a good time to take questions from the attendees.

Chris Allen, Cathedral Volunteer Team Leader, asked ET if she had noticed a surge in support from people wishing to become Friends during this time. ET said what has been most noticeable has been an increase in additional donations made on top of membership fees by existing Friends. ET said in the past year there has been a 10% increase in the number of new members, notably since the creation of the digital newsletter. ET said that by introducing digital forms of communication we have been engaging with a more diverse demographic that we were not previously reaching. ET said that by rolling out a more extensive digital plan, including a Friends website, we will be able to recruit even greater numbers of Friends.

A Friend asked if it was possible to purchase the digital calendar as it was beautiful. NW said this was created by colleagues at St Paul's Cathedral Trust in America and said only available digitally but can be printed off.

Peter Chapman said it is important the script on the new Friends website and Cathedral website is consistent. ET and JB agreed.

A Friend based in America said that holding the AGM via zoom has allowed him to attend the AGM for the first time. He is a supporter of increasing the digital outreach of the Friends, as a result.

Phillip Rice, Friends Council member, passed on his thanks to the Cathedral staff for their hard work during this time. Phillip Rice said building the new Cathedral website should be a priority.

A Friend asked how many volunteers are currently still involved with St Paul's. The Dean said a number of volunteers are returning as of July 13<sup>th</sup>, the reopening of the Cathedral after lockdown one ended. Chris Allen, one of the team leaders said 30-40% of volunteers have returned.

## **5. Financial Statements**

*Any questions to Rachel Taylor and Robert Palmer*

Rachel Taylor, introduced herself as the new Finance Manager at St Paul's. RT said that the 2019 financial statements have been signed off by the auditors. RT said in

summary, the income for 2019 was £69k compared to £85k in 2018. The grant expenditure for 2019 consisted of £20k to the Schools and Families Department and £10k to the Friends sponsored Chorister. The running costs for the Friends was £35k. The events ran in 2019 had a small deficit of £450 on income of £9,300. For 2019 the Friends recorded a loss of £13,126 compared with a loss in 2018 of £18k. As of Dec 2019, funds carried forwards was £374k. The reserves policy continues that the Friends bank account must contain £100k at all times. The accounts in their entirety were sent before the meeting to the Friends.

One of the Friends asked what the £35k running costs went towards. JB said that £35k covers some of the salary of a paid post which looks after the running of the Friends.

JB said as we were looking to be less reliant on visitor income, and diversify income streams, the Friends are more important than ever in supporting the Cathedral.

## **6. Appointment of Auditors**

RT proposed we keep WestWake and Price as the same auditors for the 2020 auditors. All were in agreement.

## **7. Any Other Business**

A Friend asked if the Friends membership fees will be raised. ET said as a result of the pandemic the membership fees will not be raised. All that has been changed is that the £50 membership fee will now allow for more flexibility than before, as for £50 an individual can bring any guest they wish. £30 will stay the price for individual membership.

A Friend asked how elections to the Council will be happening this year. JB proposed that given the complexities of an election process over zoom that we postpone until next year. However, given that Phillip Rice and Samuel Ennis were elected members in 2017 for a 3 year period it was proposed that they be re-elected for another three years. Everyone was in agreement.

There was no other business.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20h.  
There were 100 attendees