

Minutes of the 73rd AGM of the Friends of St Paul's Cathedral

Thursday 9th October 2025

OBE Chapel, St Paul's Cathedral

Welcome

The Chair, The Reverend Canon Dr Catherine Okoronkwo, Canon Steward welcomed everyone to the 73rd Friends Annual General Meeting and opened the meeting at 1.30pm with the Friends Prayer.

O God to whose great honour this Cathedral Church was built; send your blessing on all who serve and worship in St Paul's and all who enter its doors. Let it always be a place where your love is made known, your truth proclaimed, and your name glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

It was noted the agenda for the 2025 meeting, the financial report for year ending 31st December 2024 and the minutes of the previous AGM held in July 2024 were sent in advance via email and hardcopy ahead of the AGM.

There were hard copies available for use at the meeting.

Apologies

There were 18 attendees and the following apologies for absence were received in advance of the meeting.

Dr Marcus Lester
Robert and Kitty Malleson
Peter and Stephanie Chapman
Terence and Christine Marsh
Dr Barbara Corley
Kathleen Widdowson
Samuel Ennis

Sandra Hill
Jonathan Hunt
Ruth Page
Dr David Wright
Peta Walmisley
Barbara Morley
Helen Egford

Wendy Cox
Maureen White
David Mauleverer
Yodia Lo
Laura Callan
Sheila Nicoll
Kelvin Dalrymple

Introductions

The Canon Steward introduced The Reverend Canon Philip Banks, Canon Precentor.

The Canon Precentor explained his role at St Paul's and included an update on the Girls Voices project and the Choral Outreach programme.

Questions from the floor

Q. Has the Bishop of London already been installed as the Archbishop of Canterbury?

The Canon Precentor explained the process for the installation of the new Archbishop of Canterbury is as follows

- election by the College of Canons (probably before Christmas)
- confirmation of Election held at St Paul's on the 28th January 2026
- installation at Canterbury Cathedral in March 2026

Q. Can Friends have reserved seating at the Confirmation of Election service in January?

The Membership Manager will follow up with the Events Team.

Q. Are bursaries available for all choristers?

The Canon Precentor explained the Chorister Trust supports all Choristers no matter their financial background.

Q. Is there diversity amongst the choristers and how do we increase diversity?

The Canon Precentor explained the Chorister Outreach team work with schools in and around the Diocese of London and promote the Chorister programme.

Minutes of the AGM held on Wednesday 10th July 2024

There were no matters of accuracy or matters arising from the minutes of the 2024 AGM. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Cathedral Update

The Canon Steward gave several highlights from her first year at St Paul's and a general update with news from the Cathedral.

- In December 2024 the Cathedral held a series of events marking the 60th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr preaching at St Paul's and the Canon Steward was honoured to give the sermon at the MLK Evensong.
- A Safeguarding Audit took place in September. We will receive a full report from the Auditors in January 2026.
- The Girls' Voices project is now complete, and the girls have settled into their new boarding house.
- 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. On VE Day the Cathedral had a replica Spitfire at the front of the Cathedral and held a special Evensong where Friends were given reserved seating. The Cathedral held a number of events throughout the year to commemorate the anniversary including a free exhibition in the South Churchyard.
- Colleagues from across the Cathedral have been working on a data transformation project. This will combine various systems and enhance the ways in which we can communicate with our visitors and members. There has also been a significant investment into a new ticketing system which will provide a better experience for new and existing Friends members when joining or renewing membership. This investment means we can sustainably grow in the future.
- Membership prices have increased for the first time in 9 years.

- Despite the increase, membership is growing and to date we have had 447 new members. The Canon Steward thanked the Friends for their continued support.
- Two apprentices have joined the Cathedral as part of our programme to invest in heritage craft skills. The apprentices will continue their training in the Wren International centre of Excellence where many more apprentices will train in a range of heritage craft skills. The training of apprentices will be vital to the restoration of the Dome, Ball and Cross which will commence in the next few years.
- Friends will once again receive priority booking for some of the most popular services during the season of Advent.

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War the Friends were then shown a short video 'The Heroes of St Paul's'.

The video was well received, and our thanks go to the Marketing and Communications team.

Questions asked from the floor regarding the Cathedral update

Q. Is there diversity within the Cathedral?

The Canon Steward explained that the Cathedral encourages diversity through the Friends, Cathedral staff and volunteers.

Q. Do the boy and girl Choristers sing at the same time?

The Canon Steward explained the intention is for the boys and girls to sing together and separately.

Q. Many of the congregation at the Evensong service on a Sunday struggle to hear the singing and chanting – can the clergy have microphones?

The Canon Steward explained that the acoustics are challenging, and the issue has been raised before. Unfortunately, there is not much we can do. We encourage everyone to embrace the experience and immerse themselves in the sound.

The Canon Steward thanked the Development Team and Finance Team for their efforts and all they do for the Friends.

Finance Update

Rachel Taylor, Finance Manager gave an update on the Friends Finances.

The accounts for year ending 31st December 2024 had been approved by the Friends Council at a meeting on 19th May 2025.

The audit of the accounts for year ending 31st December 2024 was completed by Brebners with no matters arising.

- Total income for 2024 was £87,000 which was £80,000 lower than 2023. This was due to a reduction of £58,000 in legacy income and a change in the accounting treatment for membership income. From 1 January 2024, membership income has been recognised over the 12 months to which it relates.
- Donations were slightly higher in 2024 than 2023.
- A grant of £45,000 was made to the Cathedral.

The Finance Manager explained that the auditors had asked to account for membership over the 12 months to which it relates, given that this level of details was now available in the finance records. As of 31 December 2024, an amount of £36,655 has been deferred.

The Finance Manager asked for the auditors Brebners to be appointed for 2025. This was proposed by Yemi Ilumoka, Friends Council member and seconded by Phillip Rice, Friends Council member. There was a show of hands, and the motion was passed.

Questions asked from the floor regarding the Finance update

Q. Please explain why the membership fees are recognised over 12 months.

The fees need to be recognised over the year the membership relates to, so membership will usually cross over a calendar-year end.

AOB

There was no other business. The Canon Steward closed the AGM at 2.20pm

Due to the early closure of the Cathedral for the Bach Choir 150th Anniversary concert there were no refreshments.

The next Friends Festival and AGM will be held on Wednesday 1st July 2026