



## **The Friends of Holy Trinity Church Cuckfield**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 10:30am, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

In presenting this, my final, Annual Report I am pleased to report that the Year 2023 was the most successful ever for the Friends, measured in several ways:

- the greatest number of members;
- the greatest number of events for members and the wider community;
- the greatest number of people participating in our events;
- a 30% increase in charitable funds, which will ultimately support the conservation and restoration of our beautiful Church, its interior and its principal artefacts.

As I pass the Chairmanship to a successor, I am delighted that we provide for him or her such a strong foundation to build upon – a foundation that has been made possible by you, our members, and by the selfless support from the Committee I have been privileged to lead. Thank you everyone.

#### **Membership**

At the 2023 year end, the membership stood at 338, a 6% increase on 2022. This comprised 106 Life Members and 232 subscribing Annual Members. There was an encouraging shift of Annual Members to Life Membership – for me, it's not a matter of how many or how few years we each have left, it is much more about giving the money to a charitable fund like ours rather than letting the taxman have it in inheritance tax. So whether you're 19, 99 or anything in between do please consider upgrading to Life Membership.

In 2023 we introduced Honorary Life Memberships. This was initially offered to and accepted by Revd Michael Maine, Revd Stephen Caple, Revd David Tickner and Revd Daniel Valentine.

#### **2023 Events**

We put on nine events in the year:

- March: Musical Showstoppers with Coro Nuovo
- May: Cuckfield Park Evening with Eloise Irving
- May: The Story of Holy Trinity Church
- June: Charity Art Auction
- July: Summer Picnic at Cuckfield Park
- October: Cuckfield's Shining Stars Concert
- November: Holy Trinity's Ceiling & Stained Glass
- December: Christmas Tree Festival Preview
- December: Cuckfield Park Evening with Coro Voices

The support for these events was extraordinary. The first event of the year – Musical Showstoppers, with the Coro Nuovo Choir conducted by Michael Maine, filled the Church with an audience of just under 250. The May and October concert events brought back to their Cuckfield home its now nationally (and internationally) performing soloists Eloise Irving, Ashley Beauchamp, Jane Burnell, Laura Coppinger, Rebecca Milford and Dominic Morgan. The Charity Art Auction attracted a large number of donations of artworks from members, most of which sold for healthy sums; the unsold artworks are being sold at auction. The two illustrated talks in the Church, both about the Church, given by myself and Nicholas Rowe attracted much bigger audiences than expected, which probably reflects the appetite to know more about the beautiful Church that the Friends exists to support.

Particular thanks go our President, Bryan Mayou, and Dr Susan Mayou for so generously opening their Cuckfield Park home for two very special 'salon' evenings in the Spring and at Christmas, and their garden for our traditional Summer Picnic. Their support for the Friends is hugely appreciated.

### **Charitable Funds**

The Friends' accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, approved by our Independent Examiner, accompany this report. In summary, a 30% increase of £16,213 to our charitable funds was achieved, bringing the total assets at the year end to £69,381. In addition to subscriptions and event surpluses it is important to acknowledge that we also receive donations from some members. They should know that their thoughtfulness is recognised and appreciated.

Mindful that a major Church restoration project is looming – the Church roof – the Friends has sought to conserve and rebuild its funds following a £40,000 contribution in 2021 to the Tower conservation works. As it stands, the £69,381 currently available would make but a small contribution to the roof works (costing, we believe, well into seven figures.) Hence the Friends aims to build on its recent successes and to introduce new ways of widening the scope of its fundraising. These include a major community-wide membership drive, the groundwork and planning for which has been undertaken, and a drive too to develop high-value corporate memberships and sponsorships. In addition, of course, to building upon the events programming, fixtures for which already extend into Spring 2025.

### **Committee**

What the Friends does doesn't just happen of course, but depends on considerable planning and execution and the credit for this goes to the Committee. The Committee members are already aware of my huge appreciation for their commitment and their work, but this report gives me the chance to express that appreciation publicly. My thanks to each of them.

The AGM Agenda provides for new Committee members and Officers to be elected. At this AGM a number of retirements coincide. Patricia Jamieson has served on the Committee for ten years and she and her husband David have always been ready to organise teas, cakes, bars and the like. She will be sorely missed. We also say farewell to Jane Berkeley (again – she has previously retired but wanted to return to help) whose family commitments around the world are consuming much of her time. Our Secretary, Dick Whidborne, has served the Committee well with his duties and the very sound counsel he brings to our decision-making. Our Treasurer, Tony Lawrence, left us a couple of months ago but again his huge contribution in that role cannot pass without my own and the Committee's great appreciation. Finally, you will be aware that I too am retiring from the Chairmanship having helped lay, I hope, great foundations for a successor.

If you would like to discuss taking on one of the Officer roles – Chairman, Treasurer, or Secretary – do get in touch to learn more. Equally, if you would simply like to join what has been a lively and fun Committee, do consider standing. There are no nomination forms or other bureaucracy: just please turn up at the AGM on 13<sup>th</sup> April or, if you can't be there, let me know of your interest. I urge anyone who wants to join the Committee to do so and set aside feelings that you're not good enough or don't have time. *You are worthy, we can all make time and you are wanted.*