



7) And a glimpse into the near future

- We have some sparkling events ahead 'A Man of Letters' on October 18th, 'One Night in November' on Nov 14th and 'A Masterpiece Revealed' on 20th December. Please come along and spread the word among family and friends.
- We aim to build momentum on new member recruitment. This includes a 6-month project with 6 Warwick Business School postgraduate MBA students who will be testing strategies for growing our membership. Watch this space.
- Keep an eye out for our new dedicated web site: friendsofcoventrycathedral.org.uk. It will help spread our message globally and keep people in touch with all that is going on. It will also be closely linked to the new cathedral web site, coming shortly.
- We have invited applications for a further round of project funding, up to £4,000 in 2008.
- We are excited about the emerging opportunities in the ICR and have begun conversations with David Porter, the new Canon Director for Reconciliation Ministry about how the Friends can be partners in re-kindling a global network of Friends.
- We have a Friends Christmas card – to promote the Friends, the Cathedral and raise some funds. Get your packets today before they run out. All proceeds support Cathedral projects.

8) Why the rush?

- So, lots of things have happened, lots of things are happening and there's lots more to come. Some of you may be feeling a bit breathless at all the goings on. I would just like to explain the reasoning behind this deliberate rapid pace of activity.
- Next year, 2009, is our 75th Anniversary which is not the time to be getting our house in order, but rather to be presenting the best possible proposition that will encourage more people and organisations to commit to join the Friends.
- In addition we all know that the Cathedral celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 2012 and there are exciting plans now being formulated. We want to support and be a part of this.

9) And finally...

- On a personal note, I would like to thank members of Council for their unstinting efforts during this vital development phase
- Thanks to the Cathedral staff for their ongoing understanding, encouragement and support as we develop our activities and approach.
- Special thanks to Brenda and Helen for the tea and cake to follow.
- Most of all, a huge thank you to all our members present here today and around the world, both for keeping faith with the Friends during the recent lean times and for your wonderful encouragement and support as we once again begin moving things forward.
- It is a privilege for me to be serving the Friends at what I believe is a defining moment both for the Friends and the Cathedral. As they say, watch this space!

Peter Woodward,

Chairman, The Friends of Coventry Cathedral
September 2008

Annual General Meeting 28th September 2008 Chairman's Report

We are all aware that *The Friends* has been through a difficult period. There have been real challenges in finding a clear direction and perhaps more importantly, willing hands with the energy to turn ideas and the limitless potential, into reality. At the outset today I wish to pay special tribute to the small band of people who have kept the flame alive during those dark times. I trust they will now be able to share in the excitement of what is emerging. For without you, we would certainly not be here today.

In my report I want to focus on the last few months of activity and then to offer a glimpse of things to come.

A new 13-strong Council was elected at our EGM on 19th May 2008. It features a blend of experienced *Friends* and new kids on the block. And we've been busy on your behalf; very busy. So here's a whistle-stop tour of what we've been up to over the last 4 months.

1) Consolidating our existing membership

- We have contacted all existing members and updated most contact details as well as giving subscription reminders, where required.
- We have issued 2008 Membership cards. For the first time these offer a 10% discount at Benedicts Coffee shop and St. Andrew's bookshop – a small thank to you for your loyalty and support to the Cathedral.
- However a huge thank you goes to Helen McGowan who has done such a great job in getting to grips with old systems, creating new systems, managing the huge increase in correspondence - and smiling throughout- at least in public!

2) Recruiting new members

- We have a new membership leaflet. We manned stands at the Godiva Festival in July and The Heritage Weekend in September, raising our profile in the City and learning as we went along.
- We have begun encouraging Friends to recruit their own friends and relatives through word of mouth. Personal recommendation is the most powerful marketing tool we have. And the result so far... In just 4 months we've welcomed 40 new members. This is the biggest rise in membership for any year since 1963 and we still have 3 months to go! We are back up to the membership level of 1988. But we have a long way still to go to reach the 1,552 members we had in 1963, which was the high watermark for *The Friends*.
- Why is it important to have more members? Well, the more members we have the more people who feel a link to the Cathedral and have contact with its ministry; the more people to help out; the more resources to make a difference to life at the Cathedral.

3) Finance matters

- You have heard from Denise about her work to get the books up to muster. Not easy after such a time of hiatus. I am delighted that, after a period when the Friends found themselves in breach of Charity Commission reporting requirements, we are now fully compliant again.
- We have a first class independent examiner in David Spafford, who has also been a great source of support and advice.
- At Council meetings we have agreed protocols for our internal financial management and systems for monitoring income and expenditure. On finance, we are now well organised.
- In August we compiled guidelines and a formula for how we allocate our funds. We want to be generous with our gifting, but we also need to have an eye to the medium and long term, especially with a large proportion of Life Members to serve, many of whom joined some years ago.
- We now have Friends Gift Aid envelopes to maximise the value of cash received at events.
- Without absolute clarity and probity over financial matters we cannot function effectively or enjoy the trust of our membership. Denise has done a remarkable job to date. On your behalf I would like to thank her for the dedication to the task in hand. Fainter hearts might have taken flight!

4) Governance

- Given the significant workload on our plate, Council is currently meeting on a monthly basis.
- I have agreed a quarterly briefing and planning meeting with the Dean. He also receives all Council minutes.
- We will keep under review further ways to ensure we integrate appropriately with the family of committees and complexity of internal structures to ensure we can make the most positive contribution as a full partner to Cathedral life.
- We are also placing a high priority on a planned succession of key roles to ensure we don't suffer the crisis of mass retirement that was so damaging in 2006.

5) Events

- We are trying to organise Friends events to achieve a blend of fellowship, relaxation, interest, learning and fundraising. We welcome feedback on your experiences and we are learning as we go.
- 50 people attended a Cava and Canapé reception hosted at the Deanery, before the International Church Music Festival concert given by St Michael's Singers in June. This included some important invited guests from the City.
- Over 100 people came along to the Friends Open Garden at Smithy Cottage on the one dry day of July. The afternoon also raised £600 towards funds.
- And today we have 70 plus people here, which is just great.

6) Project funding

- The Council has developed new guidelines for funding projects, building on experience from the past. We want to be positive about supporting suitable projects in 2008.

- Additionally we have been blessed with a generous bequest from Mary Edith Weight, who for many years was a regular Sunday '8 o'clocker'. This has given us the opportunity to make some positive funding decisions.

- So far we have agreed to support 3 projects in 2008:

a) The Tolling Bell. Canon Adrian came to us with a proposal to activate a bell that would ring out across the city before all services. It is a 'sharpened ninth' fixed in the bell chamber that has never heard before. We have worked together to develop a flexible and robust solution that will work for the Cathedral long into the future. And we now have a wonderful new sound in the City.

A new chime mechanism has just been installed. The ageing 1980's bell chime control panel has been replaced by a modern reliable Apollo 2 system. We have a remote manual control system, allowing tolling for special services and half speed tolling for solemn occasions, without the need for vergers or stewards having to climb the tower.

We have also funded the replacement of a piston that was sticking on the bell chime whenever the temperature fell below 4 degrees C. **Friends gift : £5,500**

We were only able to contemplate this scale of project due to the generosity of American donors. They are Friends of the Woodiwiss family whose daughter Anna was killed in an accident in Afghanistan earlier this year. Anna was a former employee of ICR and a great friend to the Cathedral. The bell was dedicated 'Anna' in her name at a special service on 19th June, attended by members of her family.

b) The New Archives Centre. We received a request to help with funding internal fittings in a new archive centre in July. The new centre has now been created with mezzanine floor and rack shelving installed courtesy of the Friends. Mission accomplished in double quick time. **Friends gift: £3,500**

c) The Mervyn Haigh Memorial Chapel. You will have read about our efforts to return this beautiful sacred space to its proper use as a chapel.

The Stage One clear-up was completed with the enthusiastic support of students attending an ICR Reconciliation Youth Conference from Germany and Northern Ireland, under the watchful eye of Mike and Pat Stansbie. I am delighted that the chapel will be re-dedicated today at the end of Evensong.

Stage Two will be ensure waterproofing of the space along with lighting and electrics work. This work is already in progress.

Stage three is to encourage the best use of this intimate space for prayer, services, special occasions and guided visits **Friends gift: £3,000**

- We have decided to invite Friends to contribute directly to our 2008 Appeal, matching £6,000 from current Funds This makes a total of £12,000. In just 3 weeks since we launched the appeal we have already received 20 donations both large and small. We are now just £2,000 short of our total target. So please do help us if you are able.

- We are aware that there are many routes by which people can support the Cathedral. Through direct donations, envelope schemes, the Development Trust and the soon to be launched Jubilee Appeal. We believe we can make a distinctive and complimentary contribution and that many members will find this a positive route to help make a difference. We'll keep our approach to fund raising and gift-making under constant review and welcome your comments on this aspect of Friends activities.