



Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16th May 2025 at Augustine United Church, Edinburgh

	Item	Comments
1	Devotions	The Convener (The Very Rev Dr Andrew McLellan) opened the meeting with a reading and prayer. There was a one-minute silence allowing reflection on the current situation in Gaza.
2	Welcome and Apologies	<p>A welcome was extended to all members, new members, guests and those online, particularly Rev Dr Stewart Gillan, Minister of St Andrew's Jerusalem. Andrew also welcomed Rev Muriel Pearson (Associate Minister, St Andrew's Tiberias) who was in Scotland for the General Assembly and Rev Trish Archibald, 2023 Scholar and committee member, who has just been elected to be the new minister of Gorgie and Palmerston Place.</p> <p>35 members were present in the room; 7 members followed through the streaming. Apologies were received from 15 members.</p>
3	Minutes of AGM 2024	
i	Approval	The Minutes, having been circulated prior to the meeting, were accepted as an accurate record by those present. Approval was proposed by Tom Watson and seconded by Carol Morton and agreed by those in attendance.
ii	Matters arising	There were no matters arising from the Minutes that would not be covered elsewhere on the agenda.
4	Retiring Address from the Convener	<p>Andrew reflected on the past three years, particularly the horrors of the last 18 months. He talked of his pride in Muriel and Stewart – what they are able to do in the circumstances; the loneliness, the anxiety, the determination, the faithfulness, and the cheerfulness ensuring that The Friends have a right to be proud of their work.</p> <p>He thanked Kenny Roger and Rebecca McMonigle for their ongoing work within the Church of Scotland and their support for The Friends.</p> <p>He mentioned Alan Gordon and Maureen Jack's address at the General Assembly 2024, drawing attention to the silence and lack of action of the Church of Scotland; an address which was well received.</p> <p>He gave thanks for the visits to Scotland by partners from Israel/OPT that have been encouraged and enabled, often in partnership with Christian Aid; the relationship with Hadeel; the improved modes of communication with the membership; and the undertaking of the promotional video which has just been completed.</p> <p>He mentioned a highlight as being that of the St Andrew's Day Service in 2023, at the end when he was able to bless Stewart as he returned to Jerusalem after having been evacuated in the early days of the Israeli attacks on Gaza.</p> <p>Gratitude was expressed to the committee – for their friendship, commitment, support and kindness.</p>
5	Appointment of the new Convener	<p>Rev Dr Ian Alexander was nominated, and his appointment was agreed.</p> <p>At this point Ian took the chair and gave an outline of his background. Appointed as Middle East Secretary in 1995 he has worked alongside The Friends since then. He emphasised the</p>

		heart-felt thanks to Andrew that were expressed in the Report and made a presentation to Andrew on behalf of The Friends.
6	Reports	Reports were pre-circulated, as part of the Annual Report and Accounts.
i	St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias	There were no questions relating to the Report and members were reminded that there would be plenty of opportunity to discuss anything with Muriel following her presentation after lunch.
ii	Church of Scotland	<p>Kenny Roger was invited to give a short update on what was happening in the Church of Scotland work in Israel and Palestine. His work had previously been located within the Faith Action Programme but had recently been put within the department of the Assembly Trustees.</p> <p>He confirmed that Archbishop Hosam Naoum, Archbishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem, will speak at The General Assembly. It is hoped that the Church of Scotland will speak out more on the situation in Israel/OPT following the General Assembly.</p> <p>Kenny paid particularly tribute to the work that Stewart and Muriel do and emphasised how the Faith Action Programme do their best to amplify that.</p>
iii	Membership	<p>Carol Miller talked about the growth of membership, highlighting the pursuit of Gift Aid and standing orders to boost revenue.</p> <p>Associate membership is to be encouraged through presbyteries, churches or guilds thereby increasing awareness of The Friends and their work.</p> <p>The cost of mailing to those for whom email addresses are unknown was raised, resulting in a suggestion that the committee might consider adding a surcharge to those without emails. Ian suggested that this would best be considered at the next committee meeting.</p>
iv	Communications	Maureen Jack referred to postings on Facebook and encouraged feedback from members – whether relating to items that should not be posted or topics that should be posted.
7	Business	
i	Accounts and Budget	<p>The Statement of Accounts, for the year ended 31 March 2025, had been circulated with the Annual Report. <i>It is not for the AGM to approve The Friends' Accounts as they form part of the accounts of the Church of Scotland.</i></p> <p>Tom Watson outlined the improved subscription over the previous year although stressed that The Friends should continue to seek donations, particularly from Life Members if they felt able to make an annual contribution.</p> <p>A proposed fund-raising strategy is being reviewed in consultation with Stewart and Muriel.</p> <p>The committee was pleased to be able to send £4k during the year to the congregation of St Andrew's for pastoral matters, to be distributed at the discretion of the ministers.</p> <p>Budget 2025/6</p> <p>Tom explained that the new item, Church of Scotland administration cost, relates to banking and support costs for The Friends from the CoS. Some other departments are also being charged for legal and accounting expenses. This item is included in the Budget for 2025/6.</p> <p>Scholarships were budgeted for 2024/5 but were unused due to the current situation. Tom added that the committee is reviewing the nature of scholarships to be granted, therefore the funds are included in the budget for 2025/6.</p> <p>The Budget was approved by all present.</p>

ii	Subscription	<p>Subscription 2025/2026</p> <p>The committee's recommendation that the annual subscription of £20, for individual as well as Associate members, should be retained, with an encouragement being sought for donations, was agreed by those present.</p>
iii	Adoption of the revised Constitution	<p>The constitution, along with proposed revisions, had been circulated prior to the meeting, with members encouraged to comment on them at the AGM. There were no comments.</p> <p>Acceptance of the updated constitution was proposed by Maureen Jack and seconded by William McLaren and Norman Shanks.</p> <p>All were in agreement.</p>
iv	Election of the Committee 2025/6	<p>Retirals: Andrew McLellan, Jim Francis, David Coulter and Jamie Erskine.</p> <p>*Vice-Convener: Ian introduced Val Brown, head of Christian Aid Scotland and a member of the committee, who had been proposed and is prepared to stand; it was agreed that she should be elected.</p> <p>*Re-elections: following completion of their three-year term as committee members, and eligibility for a second term, Alison Jack, Maureen Jack, Calum MacSween, Carol Miller and Douglas Simpson were all re-elected, having agreed to stand.</p> <p>*Election: Carol Finlay, retiring from the Church of Scotland after 36 years working with the World Mission Council and its predecessors and successors, was nominated to join the committee, is prepared to stand and was elected.</p> <p>*Biographical notes on all the above were contained in the Annual Report.</p> <p>Ian thanked those retiring from the military side of the committee, particularly focussing on the work undertaken by Jamie Erskine, over his 20 years with The Friends. His emphasis on the importance of St Andrew's Jerusalem both as a church and as a war memorial dedicated to those who died in the Palestine Campaign in 1917 has been greatly valued.</p>
	Video	<p>The recently completed video of The Friends was shown at this stage.</p> <p>Although already on The Friends' website, and the website of St Andrew's Jerusalem, it was suggested that the video be available for circulation to presbyteries, congregations and guilds as a short introduction to The Friends. It was proposed that the video be uploaded to YouTube for ease of access/distribution.</p> <p>Thanks were expressed to the anonymous benefactors who financed the production of the video, thereby resulting in no cost to The Friends.</p>
8	Strategy	<p>The paper relating to the strategy that The Friends propose to undertake during 2025/30 was circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>By way of background, Ian explained that following a discussion by the committee, a small group undertook to reflect on the direction of The Friends over the next five years. This paper was then considered by the committee and was now being presented to the members for their comments relating to the future strategy.</p> <p>Norman Shanks conveyed appreciation of the document stipulating that it articulates worthwhile objectives, particularly taking into account the current times.</p> <p>There being no further comments, the Members agreed adoption of the strategy.</p> <p>Ian further outlined the dates that should be commemorated over the next five years, both at home and in Jerusalem and Tiberias, and explained that consideration is being given to appropriate ways of marking them.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2026 70 years of inauguration of The Society of The Friends of St Andrew's (now The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias) in 1956 • 2027 Centenary of the laying of the foundation stone of St Andrew's Jerusalem in 1927 • 2030 Centenary of the opening of St Andrew's Jerusalem in 1930
9	St Andrew's Day Service, Edinburgh	Due to St Andrew's Day falling on a Sunday in 2025 it was agreed that the annual Service will be held on Friday 28th November 2025 at 2.00pm in St Cuthbert's, Lothian Road.
	St Andrew's Day Service, Jerusalem	The date of the St Andrew's Day Service in Jerusalem has yet to be confirmed. Muriel explained how difficult it is to plan ahead, particularly in terms of the tone of the service. In 2024 the much more reflective service was greatly appreciated by the groups in attendance. She expressed gratitude to the generosity of The Friends for supporting the reception following the service.
10	Vote of Thanks	<p>Norman Shanks was invited to offer the Vote of Thanks.</p> <p>Thanks were expressed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Friends and friends – both present, online and those thinking of us • The Committee for their expertise, enthusiasm, commitment and for ensuring that The Friends flourish • 121 staff – support provided by Kenny Roger, Rebecca McMonigle and Elaine Macadie • Augustine United Church – the minister and support staff for the use of their facilities and technical help • All responsible for production of the video • Stewart and Muriel who are at the front line in times that are challenging and demanding; their regular messages that disturb and inspire keep us well informed and both are constantly in our thoughts and prayers • Carol Miller in her role as Secretary <p>And to Andrew at his final AGM as convener. He outlined how long he has known Andrew, and how he and Irene are good friends of the Shanks family.</p> <p>He paid tribute to all that Andrew has achieved as convener; his unfailing commitment to the church as well as the cause of peace and justice for Palestinians; his personal support to Stewart and Muriel; chairing of meetings; conduct of worship; contributions to Facebook and newsletters; talks to guilds and organisations; development of partnership with Christian Aid and Hadeel; revitalisation of links with Glasgow Society of the Sons and Daughters of Ministers of the Church of Scotland; and support of The Friends' scholarship programme.</p> <p>Norman further added thanks to Andrew for being himself in fulfilling his responsibilities as Convener – an outstanding communicator, preacher and pastor with a deep concern for people; the manner in which he has combined attributes of supreme competence in facing adversity particularly through times of personal challenges at home as well as in the Holy Land, always showing remarkable resilience and positivity borne of Christian hope.</p> <p>Words taken from the Iona Community prayer – courage, faith and cheerfulness – epitomise and embody of all these qualities in the way he has led The Friends.</p> <p>Norman finished by underlining that Andrew has left The Friends in excellent shape and will be a hard act to follow, albeit the future lies in very good hands.</p> <p>The words of appreciation and thanks were echoed by those present to all named.</p>
11	Benediction	Ian Alexander closed the meeting with the Benediction, the words used by Clinton Marsh, a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and former president of The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.