



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on  
17th May 2024 at the Parish Church of St Cuthbert, Edinburgh

	Item	Comments
1	<b>Devotions</b>	The Convener (The Very Rev Andrew McLellan) opened the meeting with a reading and prayer. There was a One Minute silence allowing reflection on the current situation in Palestine and Israel.
2	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	<p>A welcome was extended to all members, guests and those online, particularly Rev Muriel Pearson (Associate Minister, St Andrew's Tiberias) and Joe Nockels (Scholar 2023). Andrew also welcomed Rev Dr Stewart Gillan, Minister of St Andrew's Jerusalem, who was in Scotland for the General Assembly.</p> <p>42 members were present in the room; 12 members followed through the streaming. Apologies were received from 11 members. (Additionally, 54 joined online for the presentation after lunch when Stewart welcomed Joanne Billeh.)</p>
3	<b>Minutes of AGM 2023</b>	
i	<b>Approval</b>	The Minutes, having been circulated prior to the meeting, were accepted as an accurate record by those present. Approval was proposed by Douglas Simpson and seconded by Carol Morton.
ii	<b>Matters arising</b>	There were no matters arising from the Minutes that would not be covered elsewhere on the Agenda.
4	<b>Reports</b>	Reports were pre-circulated, as part of the Annual Report and Accounts.
i	Convener's report	<p>Andrew expressed his thanks to the Committee for their enthusiasm and hard work and emphasised his pledge to commit them to the growth of The Friends. In particular he thanked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calum MacSween for work on the newly formatted Newsletter, which has gone from strength to strength, both through items of interest and distribution.</li><li>• Maureen Jack for her work on a very active Facebook page.</li><li>• Carol Miller for her work on the revamped website.</li></ul> <p>He commented on how The Friends are working out their role, particularly since 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023, and the development of partnerships, both new and old.</p> <p>New partnerships include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Hadeel:</b> a formal arrangement has been agreed that they will be invited to be present at all of The Friends' events.</li><li>• <b>Guilds of the Church of Scotland:</b> Talks given by Andrew, Trish Archibald and Carol Miller have strengthened awareness of The Friends.</li><li>• <b>World Day of Prayer Scotland</b> movement: Rev Muriel Pearson and Marjorie Paton for their promotion of the Day, as well as Friends who participated in 2024 Services.</li><li>• <b>Glasgow Society of the Sons and Daughters of Ministers of the Church of Scotland</b> who are prepared to support our Scholarship programme</li><li>• <b>Christian Aid (CA) Scotland:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building on the success of the joint event in November with B'tselem, The Friends are working alongside CA and the CofS for further events.</li></ul></li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As Sally Foster-Fulton returns as head of CA Scotland, on termination of her year as Moderator of the General Assembly, we look forward to cementing the relationship established, as well as welcoming her as preacher at our Annual Service on St Andrew's Day.</li> <li>Val Brown, who has been filling in for Sally Foster-Fulton, has agreed to join our committee.</li> </ul> <p>Old partnerships where work is ongoing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Church of Scotland:</b> thanks were offered to those staff present who have continued their support of The Friends over the year.</li> <li><b>Army:</b> Jamie Erskine is making arrangements to re-establish former links.</li> </ul>															
ii	2023/2024 Accounts	<p>The Statement of Accounts, for the year ended 31 March 2024, had been circulated with the Annual Report. During the year sufficient funds were encashed so that our finances are now in balance with those of the Church of Scotland.</p> <p>Tom Watson explained that the situation in Israel/OPT has significantly reduced our spending.</p>															
iii	St Andrew's, Jerusalem (Rev Dr Stewart Gillan)	<p>Given that Stewart was the main speaker after lunch, it was agreed that any questions relating to his work would be addressed at that stage. Those unable to stay for his presentation would be welcome to talk to him following the meeting.</p>															
iv	St Andrew's Tiberias (Rev Muriel Pearson)	<p>A pre-recorded message from Muriel, currently based in Tiberias, would be shared at Item 7.</p>															
v	Faith Action Programme (Kenny Roger)	<p>The update had been circulated with the Annual Report.</p> <p>In response to a question from the floor, Kenny Roger explained that the Church of Scotland's security policy does not currently permit Mission Partners to visit the West Bank. This is under review particularly the possibility of identifying other insurers.</p> <p>Andrew thanked Kenny and those at 121 for their support and assured him that their work is much appreciated.</p>															
vi	Scholarship	<p>Apologies had been received from Alison Jack, whose update had been circulated with the Annual Report. Andrew explained that the scholarship programme has been temporarily suspended because of the security situation.</p> <p>Thanks were offered to Maureen Jack, who has coordinated production of an Information Pack for scholars, who are likely to be visiting I/OPT for the first time. This resource is also available for any other visitor, particularly those travelling independently. It can be found on The Friends' website and will continue to be updated as the situation unfolds.</p>															
vii	Membership	<p>Douglas Simpson outlined the various initiatives that have been tried, and are in place, relating to increasing membership. Looking ahead, he emphasized the importance of current Friends introducing new Friends.</p> <p><i>Membership as at 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024</i></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th></th><th>2024</th><th>2023</th></tr> <tr> <td>Life</td><td>180</td><td>185</td></tr> <tr> <td>Annual</td><td>67</td><td>45</td></tr> <tr> <td>Associate</td><td>21</td><td>22</td></tr> <tr> <td>Totals</td><td>268</td><td>252</td></tr> </table>		2024	2023	Life	180	185	Annual	67	45	Associate	21	22	Totals	268	252
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		<p><i>Changes since May 2023</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 new Annual members at £20</li> <li>• 6 Annual Members have committed to a standing order of £20</li> <li>• 4 Life members have committed to an annual standing order of £20</li> <li>• 10 have been removed from the list, either deceased or 'gone away'.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Business</b>	
i	Presentation of the 2023/2024 Accounts	<p>The Accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting. It is not for the AGM to approve The Friends' Accounts as they form part of the accounts of the Church of Scotland.</p> <p>Tom Watson explained that, historically, the funds have been running down and, within a few years, they would run out. It was agreed that the low level of income should be addressed. Standing orders and donations should be sought.</p> <p>With reference to the NIS3,748 funds held by St Andrew's Jerusalem (as noted in the Accounts), Stewart informed those present that the balance had been donated to Wi'am towards their Community Centre. Thanks were emphasised to The Friends for their generosity.</p>
ii	Approval of the Budget 2024/25	<p>The budget for 2024 is the same as that for 2023, particularly relating to the scholarship, until future opportunities become clearer.</p>
iii	Election of the Committee	<p><b>Retirements</b></p> <p>Carol Morton stepped down after 8 years on the committee; her personal experience and relentless commitment to the freedom of Palestinian people, both within the country as well as through Hadeel, were acknowledged by Andrew McLellan. She responded with thanks, highlighting the importance of St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias and assuring The Friends that her support would continue.</p> <p>Otherwise, it was noted that all other members of the committee are prepared to continue, albeit with changes.</p> <p>Jamie Erskine has stepped down from his post as Vice-Convener but is prepared to remain on the committee with a focus on military relationships. On behalf of The Friends he was thanked for his wisdom to date after many years' involvement.</p> <p><b>Proposal of new Members</b></p> <p><b>i Rev Ian Alexander</b> of the Faith Action Programme brings many years' experience of the region through his work with the Church of Scotland and other organisations such as the World Council of Churches. He also has an in-depth knowledge of The Friends. As he joins the committee it was announced that he is prepared to take on the role of Vice-Convener.</p> <p>His membership was proposed by Jamie Erskine and seconded by Trish Archibald.</p> <p><b>ii Val Brown</b>, who has been Vice-Convener of the World Mission Council and Convener of the Middle East Committee, works with Christian Aid Scotland. She has supported The Friends in their joint events, and brings with her a large amount of experience gained within various roles from across Scotland as well as the Middle East.</p> <p>Her membership was proposed by Maureen Jack and seconded by Carol Miller.</p> <p>They were both unanimously elected.</p>

6	St Andrew's Day	<p><b>Edinburgh.</b> Details were outlined relating to the Service in St Cuthbert's Church on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November at 2.00pm. Rev Sally Foster-Fulton will preach and it is hoped that St Augustine's Roman Catholic School will provide the choir.</p> <p><b>Jerusalem.</b> At this stage it is not possible to elaborate on details.</p>
7	Speakers	<p><b>Both messages were pre-recorded due to the fact that neither was able to join us for the AGM.</b></p> <p>It was explained that both speakers would be listening in and, although unable to respond to questions at the time, would be happy to follow up with responses that would be circulated with the Minutes.</p>
	Joe Nockels Scholar 2023	Joe talked about the path that his scholarship had taken and how, as he studies for his PhD in Washington, DC, he gives thanks to The Friends for the unique experience gained through his presence at the Sabeel-Kairos Conference as well as time spent with Sindyanina and Wi'am.
	Rev Muriel Pearson	<p>Muriel expanded about the uncertainty of her work in Tiberias, mainly due to being unable to enter the West Bank. She reflected on opportunities undertaken during her time in Scotland following their return on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, which allowed her to speak about the Church of Scotland in I/OPT, and her role there, both through online webinars and in-person presentations.</p> <p>She also outlined her involvement in the supplement to the CH4, compiled to encourage congregations to renew and reinvigorate their worship. Entitled 'God Welcomes All' it represents the breadth of modern worship in the Church of Scotland and is to be launched on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May during the General Assembly.</p> <p>She continued by sharing plans for the Galilee Garden beside St Andrew's Tiberias.</p> <p>She finished her presentation with a blessing.</p>
		<i><b>There were no questions for either speaker, at which point Andrew thanked them for taking time to record their message and joining in the AGM.</b></i>
8	Vote of Thanks	<p>The Vote of Thanks was proposed by Tom Burnham, who specifically mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Friends – present, online, and for those thinking of us.</li> <li>• The Committee – who ensure that the membership flourishes, through the widespread breadth of expertise</li> <li>• Andrew McLellan – for reminding us why we are there, his attention to detail and his dedication to The Friends</li> <li>• The Ministers – for their unflagging assiduousness in demanding circumstances</li> <li>• Carol Miller – for her work as The Secretary</li> <li>• Those at 121 – Kenny Roger, Rebecca McGonigle and Elaine MacAdie</li> <li>• St Cuthbert's – for their continued hospitality and warmth of friendship, as well as the use of their church and facilities.</li> </ul>
9	Benediction	Andrew McLellan closed the meeting with the Benediction.