

## **SATURDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2008**

at the YMCA Indian Student Hostel, Fitzroy Square, London

The annual Friends of the Church in India Day was held on Saturday 4th October at the Indian YMCA Student Hostel, Fitzroy Square, London, when about 100 friends and guests gathered to join in celebration.

After welcome by the FCI Chair, Revd Julie Lipp-Nathaniel, the celebration of the Indian Eucharist was led by Revd Suresh Kumar, Associate Priest of St Peter's Church, Braunstone Park, Leicester, with members assisting in the reading of lessons, the leading of the prayers of intercession and in the administration of Communion.

The Preacher was Revd Nigel Uden, Moderator of the URC Southern Synod, which is linked with the CSI Rayalaseema Diocese. Illustrating from his experiences while visiting India earlier and from the life and witness of Henry Martyn, he preached an inspiring sermon based on Isaiah 51, verses 1 - 11, showing how the prophet looked to the past with gratitude, to the present with compassion and to the future with hope - and how we today are challenged in our Christian witness by these qualities of character. We are called to be God's people, looking and listening, fulfilling a prophetic ministry, taking up the cross and following today.

The offering in the Service was for the UTC, Bangalore's Poongavanam Fund for the Health of Slum Children.

Following the Service the FCI Chair welcomed visitors from India who are at present in the UK and they gave a few words of self-introduction and were warmly welcomed.

The Indian curry & rice lunch, prepared by the YMCA as usual, was much enjoyed, in informal groups over conversation together.

After lunch there was a Special General Meeting to amend the FCI Constitution. Revd Dr. Gordon Shaw explained succinctly the steps that had been taken in the process of preparation for this. The meeting then gave its support and encouragement to the Management Committee, which then voted in favour of its adoption.

Then Revd Jessie Anand and Revd Solomon were elected to the Committee as representatives of CSI.

FCI Secretary, Margaret Smith, then read out the names of those members who had died during the past year and a prayer of thanksgiving for them in loving remembrance was offered by the Chair.

The special Speaker, Dr Daleep Mukarji, Director of Christian Aid and a Patron of FCI , was warmly welcomed. He gave an informative and stimulating address on India Today, focussing on " The Shining India and That Other India". He described the amazing changes and progress of India and its growth as a world power through its economic development, yet at the same time an increasing gap between the rich and poor, where there are deep social and economic problems for so many. All this presents a great challenge - " will India change ? can India change ? ", he asked, suggesting that " not until the marginalised people and communities are brought into the mainstream of Indian life". His address evinced great interest and he answered many questions.

Then warmest thanks were expressed to Dr Mukarji and to all who had helped to make the Day so successful and enjoyable, including our FCI Secretary and the Indian YMCA.

Conversations over a cup of tea and Indian snacks brought the Day to a close.