

MINUTES OF THE THIRTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OF THE FRIENDS IN INDIA

HELD ON SATURDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2022 BY ZOOM

The Thirtieth Annual General Meeting of the Friends in India was held on Saturday 10th December 2022. Those who joined the link by Zoom were 21 FCI members and visitors.

1. **Welcome** – The Chair welcomed those who were joined by Zoom.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

The Secretary informed members that apologies had been received from: Martin Wilson, Chellaian and Malar Lawrence

3. **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2021**

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 2nd October 2021 were accepted and **Agreed** by all members and will be signed by the Chair.

4. **The Report of the Secretary**

Margaret Marshall presented her Report for 2021/2022. During the year the Management Committee had met on 18th/19th November 2022, Friday 20th May 2022 and a further meeting is planned for Friday 27th January 2023.

A very successful Prayer Zoom was held on 16th March 2022, when many members and friends had joined to pray for India with a focus on youth concerns. The CSI Youth Director and CNI Youth President both gave presentations with pointers for prayer. This is an event that the Management Committee will be considering to again hold in the future.

Revd Israel Selvanayagam arranged a CSI Service on 30th October 2022 at The Church at Carrs Lane, Birmingham.

A special CSI meeting to host Bishops attending the Lambeth Conference was held on 23rd July 2022, at All Saints Church, Battersea. There was a good-sized gathering to meet the Rt. Revd Reuben Mark, Bishop in Karimnagar and his wife and the Rt. Revd. Barnabas, Bishop in Tirunelveli and his wife. Both Bishops shared news and reflections and a good time of fellowship with refreshments was had by all.

Work is continuing on the writing of a short history of the FCI.

Some slight wording within the Constitution is to be considered at the FCI Annual General Meeting.

FCI members have received issues of 'Pilgrim' during the year. We give thanks for the Editor and Editorial team for preparing these and also to the people who have made contributions to these editions.

Since the last FCI Day, we have lost members who have died. There is currently a membership of 65 Individual Members; 76 Joint Members and 33 Life Members, a total of 174 members.

The Secretary expressed her thanks to the Chair; the Treasurer; the other members of the Management Committee; Revd William Allberry in his various roles and the Webmaster.

The Report was accepted.

5. Treasurer's Report

Members had copies of the Treasurer's Report, the Audited Accounts and Independent Examiner's Report for 2021.

The Treasurer, Jessie Anand informed members that the Closing Balance as at 31st December 2021, was £17,900. The Income for the year had been £4,216 with the Expenditure being £4,000.

There possibly will be more expenses in the future for the publication of copies of 'Pilgrim'.

The Treasurer expressed her thanks to the Chair and the Membership Secretary for their assistance and guidance.

Members **Agreed** that the Financial Statement and Report be accepted.

6. Amendments to the Constitution

The Management proposes to the members that the following changes be made to the Constitution:

Amendment 1:

From:

2. The promotion of the Christian Religion at a local level in England, Wales, and Ireland by:

To:

2. The promotion of the Christian Religion at a local level in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland by:

Amendment 2:

From:

3.ii.f. Seeking friendly links with the Fellowship of St Thomas in Scotland, the Indian Christian Organization, and groups in continental Europe that relate to the Indian churches.

To:

3.ii.f. Seeking friendly links with other groups in the United Kingdom and continental Europe that relate to the Indian churches.

Amendment 3:

From:

6.c Co-opted members: 2 additional members may be co-opted by the Management Committee for a Term of 3 years and are open to for co-option another one consecutive term.

To:

6.c Co-opted members: Up to three additional members may be co-opted by the Management Committee for a term of 3 years and are open for co-option for another one consecutive term. They normally will be appointed for the specific roles of Membership Secretary, Education Secretary and Web Master if these roles are not held by existing Committee members. Exceptionally an additional FCI member may be elected for a different specific responsibility for a defined limited period.

Amendment 4:

From:

8. (1st bullet point) The election, when one is due or because of an unanticipated vacancy, from amongst the members of the FCI, for a renewable term of three years, of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor (the Officers). The Management Committee shall nominate a name for each of these positions, but it shall also invite nominations from members at least 28 days before the date of the AGM, these nominations to be received by the Secretary over the signatures of the proposer, seconder and consent of the nominated person – all to be members of the FCI – at least 7 days before the date of the AGM.

To:

8. (1st bullet point) The election, when one is due or because of an unanticipated vacancy, from amongst the members of the FCI, for a renewable term of three years, of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor (the Officers). The Management Committee shall nominate a name for each of these positions, and may also nominate for other elected posts to the Management Committee, but it shall also invite nominations from members at least 28 days before the date of the AGM, these nominations to be received by the Secretary over the signatures of the proposer, seconder and consent of the nominated person – all to be members of the FCI – at least 7 days before the date of the AGM.

The members **agreed** that **Amendments 1, 2, 3 and 4 be Accepted**.

The following comments were also made by members:

It was **suggested that if possible** the Elections of the Officers should be staggered, to enable continuity and to avoid all Officers retiring at the same time.

Daleep Mukarji enquired how we can find and prepare those ready to serve as new Officers. He also enquired whether members can receive a copy of the summary of the Vision Meeting held by the Management committee in November 2021.

7. Chairman's Remarks

The remarks by the Chair, Revd Adrian Watkins are attached below. This includes a summary of the main outcomes of the November 2021 Vision meeting:

8. Date and Venue for FCI Day 2023

It was **Agreed that the FCI Day and Annual General Meeting be held on SATURDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023.**

The meeting closed in prayer.

Chair's Remarks – FCI AGM on 10th December 2022

Unfortunately, we could not have a physical FCI Day this year as the date was just prior to the late Queen's Funeral and FCI Day was among many events cancelled as a result. Even before this sad event, there had been a question about the day due to planned rail strikes which would have prevented a good number from attending. But it is good to see you all today and we sincerely hope a proper FCI Day can be held next year.

Some of you may not know that **Dr Daleep Mukharji** stood down as our Patron last November for personal and health reasons. We are hugely grateful to Daleep for his unstinting support over the years and activity participation in our FCI Days, often facilitating our sessions. We wish him God's blessings for the future.

We are also delighted to welcome the **Venerable Alistair Cutting** as our new Patron. Alistair is the Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich in the Diocese of Southwark. He grew up in South India where his parents worked at a rural hospital and I believe in an area where four generations of his family lived and worked over almost a hundred years.

Margaret Marshall, our Secretary has already given you an overview of the year. But perhaps I can elaborate by talking a bit more about the outcomes from our Vision and Planning Day held over a year ago in November 2021 and then followed up at our regular committee meeting in May.

1. First the committee has reaffirmed its aspiration to widen and diversify its membership in the coming years, but without losing its core purpose and identity. This can be include building greater connections and cooperation with the Indian diaspora, with ecumenical partner churches, agencies, and organisations, former mission personnel, and connecting with younger generations. FCI also hopes to build wider South Asian friendships especially with the united churches in Pakistan and Bangladesh, but also South Asia generally.
2. It is hoped to host a leader's consultation with a small number of representatives from some of the links I have mentioned to explore future relationships and cooperation. However, in view of the forthcoming South Asia Ecumenical and Partners Forum due to be held in March next year, we wait until after that before deciding how to proceed as that too will be an opportunity for this kind of engagement and conversations.
3. Also, with the closure of Friends of St Thomas in Scotland, FCI will aim to build connections with friends in Scotland and "Scotland" will now be included in the FCI Constitution. We will also continue to encourage relationships with ecumenical friends in other European nations.

4. The committee considered that one possible outcome from such potential collaboration could be a special day conference in 2023 or 2024 that has a south Asia focus. It could possibly combine being a “Story-Telling conference” with a partnership meeting – especially recalling the successful Partnership Day held in Birmingham in 2013.
5. The committee decided to continue to organise occasional “Zoom Prayer” meetings with friends from India and other nations, one or two per year, especially as this has had a very positive impact on our engagement with the CSI and CNI. Two have already now been held.
6. The committee also has felt that the core existing activities of FCI such as FCI Day, Pilgrim magazine, St Thomas Unity lectures and occasional education seminars will continue. There is a possibility of combining the Unity lectures or education seminars with Thanksgiving Services. Also special one off events such as the gathering with two CSI bishops this past July can happen when the opportunity arises.
7. The committee has explored various ways to strengthen FCI Day, but unfortunately due to the unforeseen events this year, this will have to wait to future FCI Days.
8. FCI has already done much to strengthen its communications through the formation of an editorial team to support the Editor in the production of Pilgrim and you will have already seen the results of this. The Editor has also initiated an FCI Facebook page, where updates are posted.
9. Some of these above matters are what underlays the constitutional amendments brought to this AGM

In summary FCI is an organisation which I continue to believe has great potential and relevance to our churches here in UK, in Europe and in India and even South Asia. FCI is a unique expression of ecumenism with a mission vision that builds friendship and relationship across nations and continents. Local and international contexts are constantly changing and in flux and this calls us to continued reflection as to how we give practical expression to our vision and calling in our practical actions and activities.

The challenge is also how to unlock the potential of FCI and for that we value your prayers and ongoing support. But we cannot do all that ideally, we would like to do - we are a small organisation with limited resources and capacity and many of our members are of a certain age, and even I feel age catching up with me. Yet equally we know that God will provide and empower whatever it is He calls us to do.

We continue to also be very conscious of the need for new and younger persons to take up the office-bearer roles in the near future. It will be a priority to try and prepare the ground for this to happen seamlessly.

Finally, my **thanks to all the members of the Management Committee for their work and support, including the office bearers, Margaret, Jessie and Sumanth our editor**

and his supporting team. Many thanks also to Anand Asir who is our Education Secretary and to **Oswin Peter** our outgoing webmaster and **Selvan Enoch** who has now taken on this responsibility.

Special thanks as always must go to **William Allberry** for his tireless, faithful and detailed work as our Membership Secretary also handling the database and Gift Aid. We would be lost without all he does.

Finally, I would like to say a very big thank-you to **Andrew Wingate** who has recently completed his time on the committee as a co-opted member after many years of faithful service in different capacities. He has brought much needed wisdom, insight and knowledge and indeed pastoral concern to our deliberations. We wish him all the best for the next stage of his life journey.

Above all thanks be to God for his sustaining grace and innumerable blessings.

Thank-you and God Bless

Adrian Watkins