

FCI SECRETARY'S REPORT 2015

I offer this report after one year in the post of Secretary and begin by giving thanks to the great work of the previous Secretary Mrs Angela Wingate and her ongoing support as I begun to learn the ropes. Revd Jessie Anand and the rest of the MC have also been an invaluable source of support and guidance.

The FCI Annual Day for 2014 was held on 4th October, back in the usual venue of the Indian YMCA Student Hostel. It was attended by about 50 members and friends. As a new initiative the Eucharist was celebrated according to the rite of the Mar Thoma Church by Revd KP Johnson. Although there was unfamiliarity for many present, it was an opportunity to appreciate the richness of the Mar Thoma liturgy and it use reflected FCI's commitment to being a wider ecumenism. The preacher during the service was Revd Andrew Prasad, Moderator of the Thames North Synod of the URC and the offering amounting to £413.75 was for the Karigiri Leprosy Home near Vellore. The speaker in the afternoon session was Canon Dr Andrew Wingate who based his stimulating and informative talk on his latest book, "The Meeting of Opposites – Hindus and Christians in the West."

During the year two issues of Pilgrim have been produced to a high standard with attractive appearance and colourful pictures. The two editions have contained stimulating articles, valuable news and information. We are thankful to the excellent work done by the Editor, Revd Joshva Raja. At the 2015 AGM Joshva is stepping down and a new Editor needs to be elected.

On 16-18 March the South Asia Ecumenical Forums meeting was held at St Michael's College, Cardiff and hosted by the Diocese of Llandaff. This brought together partners, churches and friends associated with the united churches of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Revd Jessie Anand represented FCI at this meeting and Revd Adrian Watkins attended on behalf of CMS. For the first time there was an integrated meeting with a common thematic focus – "Migration, Trafficking and Escape". As we all know the issue of Migration and Refugees generally has dominated the European and International scene during the current year, only accentuating further the relevance of this particular meeting. A report can be found in the April 2015 Edition of Pilgrim. This was also a valuable time to meet and hear from the General Secretaries of the CSI and CNI, the Moderators of the Church of Pakistan and Church of Bangladesh and to meet with others from UK and Europe closely connected to these churches.

On 25 June, Revd Jessie Anand and Revd William Allberry attended a meeting at the Us offices in London to meet with visiting officers of the CSI Synod and hear current news and learn more about CSI priorities.

Currently the FCI has a "paid-up" membership of 226 individuals and 6 groups and further 12 persons whose subscriptions are outstanding. The Management Committee is particularly indebted to Revd William Allberry, Database, Membership and Gift Aid Secretary for his essential and invaluable work and support for FCI. It is hoped to invite additional groups to consider membership but so far not much progress has been made on this.

The Management Committee are very grateful for Mr Oswin Peter, Webmaster, for his work in updating the FCI website during the year. We welcome receiving contributions or news from members for the website.

The elections at the 2105 election will be for the posts of Chair, Treasurer and Editor. The post of Education Secretary remains vacant which means there are no immediate plans for another St Thomas Unity lecture. We expect that church and organisation appointed posts will all soon be filled. Mr Solomon Abraham currently represents the Indian Christian Organisation, Mrs Margaret Marshall the URC and Mr Steve Pearce, the Methodist Church. Professor Daniel Jeyaraj has recently been nominated by the CSI as its representative

and Revd Sarah Miller as the Church of England Representative. We are currently corresponding with the CNI General Secretary about a proposed CNI Representative. We look forward to welcoming and working with the new members of the committee. BMS have informed that they will no longer be nominating a representative to the committee.

There has been some further discussion by the committee of management regarding the various suggestions for the future of the FCI including having a wider membership base including those related to other Indian and South Asian churches, closer association with other organisations or bodies and greater engagement with the Indian diaspora generally. There has been an initiative for greater Mar Thoma participation. It has not yet been possible to take forward many of the other suggestions or ideas partly due to the limited time and capacity of FCI committee members and other members to take the lead on this, partly due to financial capacity, and partly due to questions surrounding the constitutional implications and whether this would mean going beyond the essential identity and purpose of the FCI. Some committee members felt the priority should be to focus on the existing strengths of FCI - the FCI Annual Day and Pilgrim magazine. From this perspective the Committee of Management did not agree to FCI taking a leading role in any second Partnership Day, though it could participate if the lead was taken by the CSI/CNI Relations Forum or another of its members. My personal reflection is that if FCI seeks to further strengthen its membership and leadership from the Indian (and possibly South Asian) diaspora and effectively networks with other groups relating to churches in India and possibly South Asia, there can be potential for a future stronger and relevant FCI, one that both engages more actively with the contextual issues in the region and with the church in the UK.

Revd Adrian Watkins, FCI Secretary
3rd October 2015