



THE LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST

Registered Charity No. 1081204

'An ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian Communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries'

MINUTES OF THE 33rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Saturday 16 November, 2019 at Our Lady of Victories, Kensington High Street, W8 6SA

At 14.00, Dr David Toorawa, Chair of Living Stones, welcomed all present (20 members).

Apologies had been received from John Boyd, Adrian Cassidy, Nicholas & Mary Grey, Finbarr Cronin, Tony Crowe and Ann Rogers

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous AGM held on 24th November, 2018, as a true record. Proposed by Ang Swee Chai and seconded by Aziz Noor.
There were no matters arising and Pilgrimages the only item for Any Other Business.

Chair's Report. As per the annual Trustees' Report. Dr David Toorawa added that our activities had centred around the important area of scholarships and one donation of £500.00 had been granted in response to an appeal from the Awareness Foundation for their "Little Heroes" programme (a full report having been circulated to trustees). Discussion and debate at executive meetings have centred around the future viability of Living Stones. As no consensus had been reached it was decided to bring the matter to the members at the AGM. David acknowledged thanks to Chris Doyle for giving the Michael Prior lecture, despite pressing family health issues. David finished by saying this was his 3rd and last time of chairing a Living Stones AGM and it had been a privilege to serve the charity in this way. There were no questions to the Chair.

Scholarship Programme There is a full photographic report in the newsletter. Dr Lesley Dawson advised that it is now rare for us to offer a full scholarship so we can support more students. Our average bursary is between £1K and £2K. 2019 recipients were Emil Haloun, Grace Al-Zoughbi, Rawan Munayer, George Hijazin, Yahya Sarsam from Iraq (on a masters programme in Austria), Sara and Adam Deik (awaiting visas so they can take up places on the Phd Theology course at Bristol). Bilal Khader had declined the £500.00 offered as this was his only source of income and this was the amount sent to the Little Heroes campaign. Lesley added that we take a pastoral responsibility for our students and keep in regular touch, where possible meeting with them when we visit during the Week of Prayer pilgrimage. Some of the post graduates we have supported are now in senior positions. Over the past 3 years we have awarded

Registered Address: 48 Strickland Way, ORPINGTON, Kent, BR6 9UE

OUR SPIRITUAL PATRONS

In the Middle East include: Archbishop Suheil Dawani, *Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem*; Patriarch Gregorios III, *Melkite Patriarch (Emeritus) of Antioch*; Nora Carmi, *Co-ordinator for Kairos Palestine*; Bishop Theodosius of Sebastia, *Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem*; Patriarch Fuad Tual, *Latin Patriarch (Emeritus) in Jerusalem*; Bishop Munib Younan, *Lutheran Bishop (Emeritus) in Jerusalem*; Jean Zaru, *Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) co-founder of Sabeel*

Elsewhere: Cardinal Vincent Nichols; *Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster*; Revd Baroness Richardson of Calow, *Methodist Church in Britain*; Archbishop John Sentamu, *Anglican Archbishop of York*; Bishop Desmond Tutu, *former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town*

£30,000 in scholarships to a total of 24 students. Thanks were extended to Lesley for the excellent job she has completed as Chair of the Scholarship sub-committee.

British Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network Lesley advised that Living Stones had joined the network 4 years ago. We are not in a direct twinning arrangement but have excellent connections with many organisations in Israel/Palestine. Lesley had informed the committee that she had resigned as a Living Stones trustee but they have retained her as a co-opted member. This year's first conference in Nablus/Sebastiya had been very successful. Representatives of 14 groups and 4 trustees from the UK attended, together with many Palestinians. One of our former scholars, Jack Nassar, was present. They have secured funding for a one-year administrator appointment. The 2020 conference will take place at Kennington in London. No questions.

Finance Dr Cyril Young firstly thanked Rene Meissner, the retired treasurer, for his work on reconciling the year end accounts which had now been examined. He pointed out that on Page 2 the income was £7,300 (less than 2018). Many members have continued to pay subscriptions at the old rate, despite many reminders. We are using the capital from the main Michael Prior Fund, so the interest also goes down. CCLA have continued to give excellent rates. In the last few years we have drawn out £9,000 in scholarships which we have managed to regain at the end of each year. The Michael Prior fund currently stands at £98,851 but this is flexible and could drop by 25% overnight. Catherine Langrish asked for clarification of the column heading "Restricted funds" on page 7 of the annual report. Cyril responded that this matter had been discussed in full by the executive without final consensus. Alison was asked to duplicate the appropriate minute. (*see below*). There were no further questions to the treasurer.

Rev Andrew Ashdown proposed and Dr Ang Swee Chair seconded that the accounts be adopted. **All in agreement** 3 copies were signed by the Chair and Treasurer.

Appointment of Independent Examiners. Cyril recommended that we continue with Chanter, Browne and Curry, as they have proved themselves efficient, courteous and competitively priced. Deacon Duncan Macpherson proposed and Bridget le Huray seconded we retain their services.

Agreed

Any Other Business Jo Simister advised that the World of Prayer pilgrimages had started in 2012 as an excellent opportunity to encounter Christians at worship in Jerusalem and to share their various insights. The June newsletter had advertised the 2020 pilgrimage with an extension to the Galilee, but it became clear this was proving too expensive, due to a poor dollar rate and the uncertainty around Brexit. Thus a shorter itinerary, 25th January to 2nd February, run in conjunction with the Diocese of Derby, has been set. As this programme conforms to the ideas of LS, it is referred to as a living stones pilgrimage.

Andrew Ashdown mentioned that in May, he is leading a group to Lebanon, visiting refugee camps and local communities. All present were encouraged to consider participating as the impact of these pilgrimages, encountering Christians in their local Middle Eastern context, is profound.

Retirement and re-election of the present Executive committee

All members of the Executive stepped down. As per the agenda, David Toorawa had kindly agreed to stay in the chair until the vote had been taken, and Alison Driscoll to continue taking the minutes.

Dr Duncan Macpherson presented the Living Stones Lite proposal, seconded by Len Harrow

Dr Cyril Young presented the Embrace alignment proposal, seconded by Felicity Young

2 non-members, Alan Ball and Andrew Roland were appointed as tellers and a ballot was taken.

Voting Strength: 28

LS Lite – 16

Embrace – 12

As neither proposal had achieved the required two-thirds majority, the status quo prevails.

Catherine Langrish proposed a vote between LS Lite and the status quo.

Canon Richard Wheeler felt this would not be legal practice and that there should be a new Executive committee which would then discuss how Living Stones proceeds as a charity.

Thus it was agreed that a new committee should be formed:

Chair	Colin South
Vice-Chair	Rev Deacon Duncan Macpherson
Hon. Treasurer	Michael Doherty
Secretary	Len Harrow

Other trustees nominated were Aziz Noor, Genevieve Macklin, Philip Francis and Rev Andrew Ashdown.

Lesley Dawson proposed and Ang Swee Chai proposed that the committee be elected en bloc.
Agreed.

The Annual General Meeting finished at 15.30 with evening prayer, led by Rev Deacon Duncan Macpherson.

- **Relevant minute extracts:** *In the absence of clear adopted Minutes he (Cyril) considered that there was no restriction on the Michael Prior Account. This point of view was contested by Duncan, Len and Aziz so there was further discussion on the details supplied by Colin South and the meetings which took place in 2007, without final consensus. Len is very clear that, all this notwithstanding, the Fund has been operated appropriately for many years as a restricted account”*