FRIENDS OF STEYNING PARISH CHURCH

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025

It is the tenth anniversary of the revival and reconstitution of the Friends under Sarah Leigh's guidance, and considerable progress has been made in that time. At the 2024 AGM the Trustees were re-elected with the addition of Julia Bonner, who had taken over as Treasurer. Sarah herself continued as Publications Secretary, having also covered as Secretary since Liz Harries retired. Judie Thomson succeeded Sally Barnard as Membership Secretary and John and Felicity Downe agreed to continue recruiting members. All these officials do amazing work for the Friends, and we are very grateful to them and all members of the Committee for their inspiration and support. Jane Keane served as Secretary for most of the past year but sadly had to resign for personal reasons. We hope to find a successor very quickly.

The Friends rely on volunteers who give generously of their time and talents. David Fitton has done the annual inspection of our accounts for many years. We thank him very much and welcome Paul Kirkbride who has agreed to take over. Newsletters have been published and Edward Harrison has kept the website up to date. Brian Sawyer and Carol Mitchell are the driving force behind the many musical events which benefit the church. Christine Aubrey chairs the Project and Fundraising Committee which is liaising with the PCC, the Friends and the professional fundraisers to explore every possible way to find money for the church's considerable needs. Tony Struthers has brought valuable experience and insights to bear on this. The death of Malcolm Donaldson was a great loss to us and to the whole community: we extend our warmest sympathy to Julia and the family.

The needs of the church are well known but grow more challenging as time goes by. The **urgent** necessity to repair the tower and move the central heating boiler has tended to obscure the **essential** works to improve access, toilet and catering facilities and create safe space to move. Ironically money is needed for match funding to attract significant grants and the very improvements we wish to make would in themselves make fundraising easier once complete. Where and when do you start? Dealing with these conundrums, seeking the statutory permissions, writing appeal documents and applications (assisted by Stephen Holliday) and waiting for results occupy a lot of time and energy. So the launch of the public phase of the appeal is still some way ahead.

Meanwhile, there have been memorable activities in this past year which have brought in some money and strongly emphasised those needs as well as the potential of the church. Last November, soon after the AGM, there was a presentation about the Vicars of Steyning over the centuries. This had been triggered by the plan to have the list in church revised and regularised with new calligraphy which the Friends will pay for. The existing list has anomalies, and painstaking research has revealed imposters and resurrected absentees as well as highlighting some outstanding characters from the past. The present Vicar (who survived unscathed), Sarah Leigh, Chris Tod and Brian Hanson gave spirited performances, and Christopher Whittick had contributed fascinating research. Bill Thomson's ingenious timeline provided historical context. Also in November there was a Children's Extravaganza organised jointly with the Church. On 12 April, just before Holy Week, the Hanover Band and Chorus with excellent soloists, performed Bach's moving St John Passion in the church to a large and appreciative audience. On both occasions and many others Edward and Kate Harrison, Bill and Judie Thomson, Sarah Lavery and Kate Burnett with many other volunteers gave tremendous support.

On 20 May the Friends organised a trip to Winchester in the footsteps of Bishop Henry of Blois, thanks to Sarah Leigh, Nicola Mason (Chair of Steyning Festival), Sarah and Brian Lavery and their team. We started at the Hospital of St Cross where the masonry and stone carving in the Chapel bears very close resemblance to the magnificent Norman arcade at Steyning. The Brethren gave entertaining tours of the secular buildings. Many of us walked along the River Itchen to the Cathedral, had lunch and were given appropriately focused tours followed by visits to the Kings and Scribes exhibition. The sun shone, anecdotes emerged, the Tournai font proved a distraction, Jane Austen may have smiled a bit and the historic and architectural importance of Steyning Parish Church was properly acknowledged.

At the time of the 2025 AGM our total funds are just under £112,000 with no major commitments. The Church has received generous donations and legacies, one of which was in the form of shares which is tax efficient as no capital gains are charged. There are 195 members which is nearly a 15% increase on last year. Those who support us remain loyal and enthusiastic. We need more funds to contribute to the great work when the time comes, more members to recruit support and more volunteers to help, especially in a Festival year. May I urge all Friends to spread the word and encourage others to join? Membership is free but together we can help raise the vital funds the church so urgently needs, increasing and diversifying its use. To this end, please attend the AGM and the consultation which follows. Thank you very much for the many returns we have received. Your ideas are greatly valued, and your financial support makes a real difference.

Jeremy Tomlinson

Chair

Registered Charity No. 1169773

Income and Expenditure Account 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025

	2025	2024
INCOME	£	£
Donations	1,240.82	1,561.89
Interest	4,504.08	4,697.57
Hanover Band Concert	240.07	699.40
Wine etc.at Events	149.00	200.00
Steyning Society - Winchester Trip	100.00	
Vicars Talk		225.60
	6,233.97	**7,384.46**
EXPENDITURE		
Steyning PCC towards Conservation Survey		
IT Support	153.77	
Ten Fee	21.00	21.00
Ecclesiastical Insurance	221.35	210.88
Web Design	75.00	
Printing (Leaflets)	280.00	390.00
Fastmail	51.30	
	802.42	**621.88**
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Deficit / Surplus	**5,431.55**	**6,762.58**
2024 Funds Carried Forward	108,992.94	102,230.36
Funds at 31st December	**114,424.49**	**108,992.94**
Balance Sheet at 31st December 2024		
Funds	**114,424.49**	**108,992.94**
Assets		
Barclays Bank PLC Current account	4,533.34	3,605.87
COIF Deposit account	109,891.15	105,387.07
	114,424.49	**108,992.94**

Julia Bonner Hon. Treasurer J Bonner Date 9/10/2026

Independent Examiners Report

I have examined the income and expenditure account for the period ended 31st December 2025 and Balance Sheet at 31st December 2025 and confirm that they are in accordance with the records of the charity.

Paul Kirkbride P. J. Kirkbride Date 9th. October 2026