

Annual Report and Accounts

1st January 2024 – 31st December 2024



Christians on Ageing
Registered Charity number 289463

Registered address:
The Depository
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Christians on Ageing

Christians on Ageing – a voice for older people

The story of older people is the story of their unique life journey. They have lived through war and peace, have known hope and failure, and have found, and sometimes lost, friendship and love.

For many, their Christian faith has been the context within which they have lived and in which they will die. They have handed on the gospel message to the next generation but are also living it day by day. Their story is not just about the past; they are part, in the here and now, of the Churches' proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They are a valued and precious resource. They want to give as well as receive.

Christians on Ageing is one of their voices.

Statement of Purpose

We work for a society in which older people are heard, supported and valued.

Our activities aim to:

- collaborate with Christian and other agencies with similar visions
- inform and facilitate debate on issues of concern for older people
- celebrate the gifts and potential of later life
- influence policy-makers, service providers, paid carers and practitioners

We deliver these activities through conferences, publications, commentaries and informational resources, focusing on faith, spirituality and flourishing in later life.

Our vision and values

Christians on Ageing – registered as 'Christian Council on Ageing' – is a voluntary, national, ecumenical member-based organization. It is a resource to the Churches and to other bodies and individuals concerned with the needs, especially the spiritual needs, of all older people.

Christians on Ageing believes that the spiritual needs of older people are often not appreciated or met by the Churches, nor is the potential contribution that older people can make to the Churches being fully realised. It recognises the contribution that the Churches have made, and continue to make, in providing care and support for older people.

Christians on Ageing complements the activities of other voluntary agencies such as Faith in Later Life, Anna Chaplaincy, and Age UK and the work of central and local government in health and social care.

Our current prime areas of interest and action are:

'Cherished not forgotten' - activities that relate to excluded older people for whom the church can play a role, such as:

- in illness and disability
- for people in hospital, nursing or residential care
- those living with dementia and their carers
- people who are digitally, socially or economically disadvantaged
- those who are isolated or lonely
- older prisoners.

Mission and ministry in later life - activities that inform/support those who contribute, lay and ordained, by sharing information and good practice, and promoting training and vocation related to ministry with older people.

Later-life discipleship - activities that contribute to:

- understanding older people's spiritual growth and faith development
- promoting a positive image of older Christians' spiritual roles as elders and mentors
- encouraging intergenerational learning.

Patrons

Rt Revd Dr Esme Beswick, MBE
Joint Council for Churches of All Nations

Revd Lynn Green
General Secretary, the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith
Bishop of St Albans, the Church of England

Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler
Secretary of the Methodist Conference, the Methodist Church

H.E. Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster, the Roman Catholic Church

Archbishop Elisey of Sourozh
Russian Orthodox Church

Mrs Elaine Cobb
Director of Older People's Services, the Salvation Army

Revd Dr John Bradbury
General Secretary, United Reformed Church

President

To be appointed

Vice-Presidents

Mr Gerry Burke
Revd Dr Albert Jewell
Mr Tony Flynn
Revd Dr John Lansley

Executive Committee

Chair: Revd Dr Keith Albans (appointed September 2023)

Vice-Chair: Vacancy

Honorary Secretary: Ms Barbara Stephens

Treasurer: Sister Maureen Murphy FMSJ

Members: Revd Dr Joseph Cortis

Dr David Jolley (until May 2024)

Miss Marion Shoard

Dr Joanna Walker

Appointed Advisor: Gerry Burke (until end of June 2024)

Executive Committee report

Chair's Report

A statement of the aims, vision and values of Christians on Ageing is printed in all copies of our magazine 'plus' and is included elsewhere in this Annual Report.

I was honoured to be elected Chair of Christians on Ageing at the 2024 AGM. We knew then that my immediate predecessor, Dr David Jolley, was nearing the end of his life and it was only 3 weeks later that he died. A tribute to David, and an account of his life, was included in the Autumn 2024 edition of 'plus' – we are poorer for his passing but grateful for all that he offered to us. During the year we also marked the death of another former trustee, Mike Lewis, and Albert Jewell's tribute to Mike appeared in the Winter 2024/25 edition of 'plus'.

The Executive Committee has worked extremely hard throughout the year, meeting quarterly on Zoom with additional gatherings held as and when required. I am conscious that the volume of work, being carried by a Trustee body with several vacancies, is unsustainable even in the short to medium term, and one of our priorities as an organisation must be to recruit new Trustees as a matter of urgency. The first opportunity to do so is at the forthcoming AGM and I would urge members to consider whether this is something they may be called to do. We have been pleased to act on our statement of purpose and take positive steps forward with our current areas of interest.

Working groups: The 'Communications Committee' and 'Older Prisoners Interest Group' continue to be a creative focus for much of our on-going work. Both have presented summaries of their work as part of the Annual Report and I will not repeat that here. However, two significant highlights are worth mentioning. Firstly, the publication of a new resource on dying and death, focussing particularly on how people of faith can engage with the issue in the context of an increasingly secular society. Secondly, the positive response from the new Minister for Justice, Lord Timpson, to a letter which has led to the Older Prisoners Interest Group establishing some promising contacts.

The Communications Committee takes in the website, the e-newsletter (produced quarterly and circulated to 600+ addresses), 'plus' (our magazine which is published and distributed to members each quarter), and publications. The Older Prisoners Interest Group is working to secure relations with other organisations with interest in improving services and pastoral support to prisoners and older people subject to other aspects of the legal system, including probation.

Our interest in people living with dementia is undiminished and we are exploring how best to signpost members to the amazing variety of research and resources available, as well as asking ourselves whether, in partnership with others, there is a specific way in which we can highlight and develop resources to help the churches in their ministry in this area.

Autumn Conference: Our Conference in September 2024 was once again held online, and we were blessed with an informative and challenging day with an attendance of more than 50 individuals. We took as our theme 'What on earth should we do about dying and death?' and in the morning session we were led by Rev. Dr. Joanna Collicutt. Her presentation, *Death & Life: Exploring mortality* drew on the subjects covered in the study course recently published by BRF with the same title in which Joanna was heavily involved. Her presentation was followed by questions and then group discussions which were engaging and helpful. During the lunch break Brigitte Schwarting explored some aspects of her work as a Music Therapist with those approaching the end of life. In the afternoon session, Gerry Burke launched our new booklet (referred to above) and we then spent the rest of the time focussing on the thorny but timely subject of Assisted Dying. We focussed particularly on what perspectives our faith might offer to the debate, and what safeguards older people might require if the law is changed. We were well led by Rabbi Jonathan Romain – Chair of Dignity in Dying and Convenor of the Religious Alliance for Dignity in Dying, and Rev. Katie Tupling – Chaplain at St Hugh's College, Oxford, and Disability Adviser for the Oxford Diocese. It was a respectful discussion, both in plenary sessions and in breakout rooms and, as the expected legislation now lies before Parliament, we continue to monitor its progress with interest – with all the relevant documents available at <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3774/publications>

In the News: We have monitored newspapers and other media sources for topics that are relevant to older Christians, with monthly summaries being posted to the website. Alongside the debate around the Assisted Dying bill, the vexed issue of Adult Social Care has continued to appear in the summary most months – although signs of real progress towards solving the crisis remain hard to see. The role of family carers, as part of the system has received some attention though, sadly, this has been largely precipitated by claims for repayment of Carers' Allowance, overpaid because the earnings threshold has been breached by people whose working hours vary from month to month.

The news agenda has become increasingly dominated by global, ecological and geo-political issues which affect us all. This makes it harder to see and hear the areas of concern which relate particularly to older people, but it is pleasing to see the issue of ageism within our society given airtime both in discussion and in thought-provoking adverts. The Centre for Ageing Better deserve our thanks for spearheading this.

Conference Calls: These online calls are one of the ways in which we seek to engage with members through the year. They are roughly 90-minute sessions with input from a speaker designed to encourage discussion and debate amongst the gathering. Topics have included Ageism, Faith and Dementia and the Ambiguous Gift of Longevity.

Sadly, we have not been as successful this year in managing to arrange these calls as often as we would like, but our plan for the coming year is to hold them six times a year in January, March, June, July, October and December.

Culture Club: Another opportunity for folk to meet during the year in Culture Club, an online discussion arising from books and films which throw light on the experience of ageing. Reports of these quarterly gatherings appear in 'plus' and I warmly encourage members and others to join in. Together with our annual Conference in September and the AGM in April we are aiming to provide a way of people meeting together each month.

Concluding Comments: When Christians on Ageing (then called the Christian Council on Ageing) came into being, it is fair to say that there was little, if any, focus on or awareness of the place of older people in the churches. While many will feel that, institutionally at least, little has changed, the emergence of what I describe as a new story of ageing, with a focus on both the opportunities and callings of the Third Age alongside the broader understanding of the spiritual lives of older people, has radically changed the landscape. Christians on Ageing is delighted to work with partners in the field, although we are saddened that Faith in Older People based in Edinburgh has recently ceased to operate. Some of these organisations have very specific ministries and missions, supporting particular forms of work or resourcing particular parts of the Church. Christians on Ageing has a broader purpose and role – 'to be a resource to the Churches and to other bodies and individuals concerned with the needs, especially the spiritual needs, of all older people' and for that we rely on the support and participation of our membership. We recently revised the Membership leaflet and I encourage everyone to ensure that copies are available in their local churches – they can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary. As will be seen later in this Annual Report, our finances are relatively healthy and the Executive Committee will continue to explore appropriate ways of using these funds to support our charitable purposes.

I am grateful to the members of the Executive Committee (Barbara Stephens, Joanna Walker, Maureen Murphy, Joseph Cortis and Marion Shoard) for giving their time and support throughout this year. Special thanks are due to another of my predecessors as Chair, Gerry Burke, who having served as a member of the Executive and then as an adviser, has now formally retired and joined the ranks of our Vice Presidents.

We pray for God's blessing, wisdom and guidance on all that we undertake.

Revd Dr Keith Albans – Chair

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee has continued with its mission to improve coherence across the Charity's communications with the external world. These include the website, the newsletter, existing and new publications, online events such as conferences, conference calls and culture club, and our quarterly membership magazine '*plus*'. For example, communications were well employed in promoting and reporting on our excellent Annual Conference in September 2024.

We were grateful to Gerry Burke who, as consultant to the Trustees, continued to edit and distribute the newsletter and manage the website until new arrangements could be put in place during the year. We have moved towards a pattern of events and periodical publications that are better balanced and harmonised over the year. Our newsletter will now appear monthly as the main conduit of CoA news and events.

Continuing the review of our existing publications, some titles have been significantly updated, such as *The Spirituality of Ageing*, by Metropolitan Anthony, which now includes fascinating commentary on the life and times of the author provided by Professor Emeritus Peter Coleman. In similar vein, *Light of Faith: Reflections on growing old*, was updated by reflections on the original text as discussed in one of our popular Conference Calls. In another approach to refreshing key publications, a complete revision was made by Gerry Burke of his publication *Dying and Death: A Christian approach in a Secular Society*. A new publicity leaflet was produced to promote COA membership, available in printed and e-formats.

Our quarterly magazine for members, '*plus*', continued to appear in March, June, September and December, but with plans to move each issue on by a month, to fit the new overall communications pattern. Original articles have been commissioned addressing a wide range of COA's interests including contributions from outside the UK. Our focus tends to be on good practice in various forms of ministry with and for older people, but also includes commentary on research, policy and the context of ageing today.

Dr Joanna Walker

Culture Club

On Friday afternoons every two months during 2024, CoA invited anyone with an hour or so to spare to join us for a meeting of Culture Club, in which we reflected on themes of interest to the older generation and the ways in which the arts, both past and present, have explored them.

Our first meeting of 2024 focussed on intergenerational relationships – not just grandparenting, but also relationships between children and adults outside their family circle (as heartwarmingly depicted in the Pixar cartoon *Up* and George Eliot's *Silas Marner*, for example).

Our May meeting looked at life in a care home and was informed by input from Catherine Shoard, the film editor of *The Guardian*, who had interviewed Michael Caine about his role in one of the films we considered – *The Great Escaper*, the story of a World War II veteran who steals out of his care home to attend the D-Day landing celebrations in France. We puzzled about why the care homes portrayed in *The Great Escaper* and films *Quartet* and *Much Ado about Dying* offered an atypically superb quality of care.

Past depictions of old age, the subject of our July meeting, prompted discussion of older characters in Jane Austen (in which they loom large only as depositories of family money and thus controllers of the destinies of the young), Shakespeare (think of the 'second childishness and mere oblivion' of Jacques' seven ages of man), together with the 'Aged P' in Dickens *Great Expectations*, and Alf Garnett and Victor Meldrew in sitcoms *Till Death Us Do Part* and *One Foot in the Grave*.

Against these largely negative and sometimes malign stereotypes, we were intrigued by the motif of the older person who startles the world by solving a crime, such as Agatha Christie's Miss Marple and Mrs Wilberforce in the Ealing Comedy *The Ladykillers* and also in Richard Osman's hugely successful *Thursday Murder Club* series. Christians on Ageing member in south London Heather Saint screen-shared images of paintings by Rembrandt and we contrasted the real interest, sometimes nobility Rembrandt conveyed in the character of the person behind the lined face with the caricatures of older people Breughel chose to deliver. At this meeting we also explored the role of the dowager in real-life and fiction, referencing especially Maggie Smith's Dowager Countess in the TV series *Downton Abbey*.

Relationships between older people and their adult children held our attention at our November meeting and, as so often, our discussions resonated with debates of our own time. So, at a time of concern that the prospect of losing their inheritance to care-home fees might tempt the adult children of elderly care-home residents to coerce their 'loved one' to seek an assisted suicide, we were confronted by the grasping daughter and son-in law of the elderly patient in a geriatric ward played by Julia McKenzie in the film *Allelujah*, whose reaction on being told of the old lady's death was anger that the hospital had failed to keep her alive long enough for them to benefit from exemption from inheritance tax.

A different dynamic that intrigued us in November was rivalry between an elderly parent and their adult child: for instance, that between rag-and-bone man Albert Steptoe, set in his avaricious, selfish ways and his son Harold, struggling to improve himself, a theme underpinning the TV sitcom *Steptoe and Son*. We noted that Albert almost always came out on top, as does Marty Crane in the American sitcom *Frasier*, who finds himself unexpectedly living with his son Frasier. Together, they muddle through the navigation of their new father-son dynamic.

Culture Club meetings are informal and free of charge both to members and non-members. We welcome suggestions by prospective attenders of books, films and so on the group might dip into, while I offer a few of my own. These suggestions and the scope of the next meeting are outlined in the monthly CoA newsletter and on the Culture Club page of the CoA website, while I pen a 1,000-word report of each meeting in the CoA members' magazine plus.

Marion Shoard

Older Prisoners' Interest Group

The number of people in prison over the age of 50 (figure determined by the Ministry of Justice) has increased significantly in recent years, not least because of prosecutions for historical offences only now coming to light. Christians on Ageing has been exploring how it can help the Churches answer the question posed by Jesus: 'when I was in prison, did you come to visit me?'

In our context, as a small charity, 'visit' means 'support'. Possible responses to evidence 'support' include actual visiting of prisoners, supporting the work of prison reform charities, fact finding about the criminal justice system etc. There is a lot already happening within the system and Christian communities, but perhaps much of it is unknown to most congregations. If more of us knew about the needs of older prisoners and the range of responses possible (not easy, because of both understandable restrictions and bureaucracy) what difference could be made, not just to older prisoners but to society as a whole?

We have established links with the prisoners' group of the St. Vincent the Paul Society who offer practical support to prisoners in general mainly through the chaplaincy teams.

Soon after the appointment of the new Cabinet last summer, we wrote to Lord Timpson, Minister of State (Ministry of Justice). Following a very positive and informative response we received from Lord Timpson and a meeting with the Deputy Head of Faith Services, Chaplaincy and Faith Services, Rehabilitation Strategy and Interventions at the Ministry of Justice, we are making some headways in establishing links with the persons in the Ministry of Justice with responsibility for the chaplaincy work carried out on behalf of the main Christian denominations.

We are now also able to contact the Heads of Prison Chaplaincies (directly through the Ministry of Justice) who care for older prisoners to get a current picture of what is being provided to this particular population in our prisons. Once we establish details of specific and innovative projects, we intend to try and arrange a visit. We were very interested in the links provided to the 'Dying well in custody Charter' (last updated in June 2024) and the 'Model for Operational Delivery for Older People' (2018).

Hence, we have also enquired as to whether an evaluation from the Ministry of Justice on these particular initiatives had been or currently being undertaken and await their response.

If you know of examples of work already being done locally or regionally, we would really like to hear from you.

Please email the details to: info@christiansonageing.org.uk
We will, of course, preserve confidentiality wherever necessary.

Revd Dr Joseph D Cortis

Membership

There was a small increase in membership in 2024. At the end of the year, the Council had 110 individual members and 22 members representing organisations.

Our membership leaflet has helped raise awareness of the work of Christians on Ageing and we plan to reach out further to local Christian communities in the coming year.

Annual membership of the Council costs £18.00, both for individuals and organisations. All members receive the charity's quarterly magazine 'plus', distributed in hard copy by post and digitally.

Dr Joanna Walker is the editor of 'plus'. The publication, exclusively produced for members of 'Christians on Ageing', has continued to carry a wide range of articles, keeping people in touch with issues and concerns that have relevance to the work of the charity.

We would welcome greater engagement with members. Please do get in touch if you would like to be more involved.

Barbara Stephens

Financial Report

Statement from the Treasurer

2024 was a good year for the finances of Christians on Ageing. Our income for the year was £6,832 whilst expenditure totalled £3,661 leaving us with a surplus for the year of £3,171.

Our income benefitted from a donation of £1,000 from a similar charity which was closing and also from a legacy of £1,000 from our late Chair, Dr David Jolley.

We have continued to meet online and this has saved us expenditure on travel and the cost of hiring meeting rooms.

We close the year with total funds of £28,998.

Sister Maureen Murphy FMSJ

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts
Report to the Trustees of the Christian Council on Ageing
On Accounts for the Year Ended 31 December 2024
Registered Charity no. 289463

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Christian Council on Ageing for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's Trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent Examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with those records; or
- the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Daniel Smith

For and on behalf of John A. Porter & Co
74 Dickenson Road
Manchester
M14 5HF

17 February 2025

CHRISTIAN COUNCIL ON AGEING
Registered Charity No 289463

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year ended 31 December 2024

	2024		2023	
	£	£	£	£
<u>Incoming Resources</u>				
Voluntary Income				
Subscription Income - Individuals	2,229		1,987	
Subscription Income - Corporate				
Donations	1,827		2,610	
Donations to Newsletter				
Credits from Branches				
Tax Credits	660			
Legacies	<u>1,000</u>		<u> </u>	
		5,716		4,597
Income from Charitable Activities				
Sales	100		190	
Conference Income			<u>89</u>	
		100		279
Investment Income		<u>1,017</u>		<u>179</u>
Total Incoming Resources		<u>6,832</u>		<u>5,055</u>
<u>Resources Expended</u>				
Charitable Activities				
PLUS	1,050		1,767	
DG Newsletter				
Website	234			
Branch Expenditure				
Trustees' Travel Expenses				
Printing, Stationery & Advertising	561		75	
Post & Telephone	65		67	
Graphic Design & Artwork	425		674	
Subscriptions & Insurance	302			
Publications Purchased				
Publications Support				
Prayer Books for Prisoners				
Promotional Expenses				
Research				
Donations	150		2,000	
Bank Charges	<u>66</u>		<u>63</u>	
		2,853		4,646
Governance				
Trustees' Travel Expenses	4		67	
Meeting Rooms				
Conference & AGM	845		90	
Examiner's Fee	216		206	
Secretarial Support	488			
Other Expenses			<u>50</u>	
		1,553		413
Total Resources Expended		<u>4,406</u>		<u>5,059</u>
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year		2,426		689
Funds brought forward		25,777		25,088
Funds carried forward		<u>28,203</u>		<u>25,777</u>

CHRISTIAN COUNCIL ON AGEING
Registered Charity No 289463

BALANCE SHEET
as at 31 December 2024

2023			2024	
£	£		£	£
		Current Assets		
5,685		Cash at Bank	8,121	
<u>20,298</u>		COIF	<u>20,298</u>	
	25,983			28,419
		Current Liabilities		
<u>206</u>		Sundry Creditors	<u>216</u>	
	206			216
	<u><u>25,777</u></u>	Net Current Assets		<u><u>28,203</u></u>
		Represented by:		
	25,777	General Funds		28,203
	<u><u>25,777</u></u>	Capital Employed		<u><u>28,203</u></u>

Signed on behalf of the Executive Committee of Christians on Ageing by:

Revd Dr Keith Albans and Revd Dr Joseph D Cortis

Dated: 14th March 2025

Contact us

For enquiries please contact: Barbara Stephens
Honorary Secretary

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PO33 2EZ

By telephone Mobile: 07774 935905

By email: secretary@christiansonageing.org.uk

Through the website: www.christiansonageing.org.uk



CHRISTIANS on AGEING
a Christian voice for older people