



Christians on Ageing
Annual Report and Accounts
1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025
Registered Charity Number 289463

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

Sir John Battle KC*SG

Vice Presidents

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

Executive Committee

Chair: Revd Dr Keith Albans

Vice-Chair: Revd Dr Joseph Cortis

Honorary Secretary: Ms Barbara Stephens

Treasurer: Sister Maureen Murphy FMSJ

Members: Ms Marion Shoard

Dr Joanna Walker

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.

In writing this report my mind goes back to our gathering in York for the 2025 AGM. It was our first in-person gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic and the joy of seeing real people rather than simply a face on a screen was palpable – many described the day as being like a college reunion! Nevertheless, we have decided this year to revert to an online event which will, hopefully, enable more members from around the country to participate. Meanwhile we will continue to explore opportunities for meeting face-to-face when and where appropriate.

The Executive Committee has continued to work extremely hard throughout the year, meeting quarterly on Zoom with additional gatherings held as and when required. In December we met specifically to explore the strategic direction of CoA and to reflect on our place in a very different context to that in which we were founded back in 1982. We value our partnership with other organisations such as Anna Chaplaincy and Faith in Later life and would love to develop more joint working. Nevertheless, we recognise that we have a broader focus, and we concluded that while we must remain as a membership organisation, finding ways of expanding our audience and reach is of critical concern. To this end we have undertaken to commission some small-scale research initiatives to inform our thinking and to be a platform for publicity. Two areas which are of particular interest are barriers to the inclusion of older people in the life of the church and wider community, and the training which new clergy receive relating to ministry among older adults. In a recent Conference Call, a third area emerged for consideration – namely the spirituality of older men. In all this the need to develop a more strategic approach to publicity is clear – using both our own channels and working with our partners.

The discussion paper which formed the basis of our meeting began with the wish not to construct *“a wish list which, in reality, lies beyond our resources of time, personnel and money!”* I do not believe that the things outlined above challenge the third of those resources, but I feel less sure about the other two. As I said last year, the volume of work being carried by a Trustee body with several vacancies, remains unsustainable and one of our priorities as an organisation must be to recruit new Trustees as a matter of urgency. While we would encourage all members to consider whether this is something they may be called to do, we recognise a particular skill shortage in the fields of social media and digital marketing, and we would welcome the opportunity to broaden both our denominational and ethnic diversity.

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 primary 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, but it is worth noting the ways in which their work has fed into our on-going programme – updating our publications and informing our Conferences and Conference Calls.

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. I am aware that we have not been able yet to progress plans to promote our on-going interest in people living with dementia and I hope that this will bear fruit in the coming months.

Autumn Conference: Our Conference in September 2025 was once again held online, and we took as our theme '**Faces of Hope in Later Life**'. In the morning session, we were led by Rev. Dr. Michael Jackson, former Director of the St John's Winchester charity, and author of Still Love Left. His presentation was followed by questions and then group discussions, which enabled people to reflect on Michael's words and, in particular, on hope in the contexts of past experiences; present hope such as encountered in daily life; and hope within anticipation of the future, including death. During the lunch break we had our usual creative interlude when we were ably led by Liv McLennan. The afternoon session consisted of two contrasting presentations, which both amplified our theme of hope in later life. In one, John Macmillan, CEO of the Eric Liddell Community in Edinburgh, presented on the charity's work celebrating the legacy of Eric Liddell, a Scottish athlete who won a gold medal at the 1924 Paris Olympics but withdrew from the 100m race to honour his Christian faith. Then Olivia Luijnenburg, from Kings College, University of London, presented her research on spirituality in residential care for people living with dementia, sharing findings from two studies and introducing a new reflective spirituality tool for care home workers. The 2026 Conference is set to take place on Wednesday, 30th September 2026.

In the News: We have continued to monitor newspapers and other media sources for topics that are relevant to older Christians, with monthly summaries being posted to the website. The themes covered in 2025 were very similar to those which dominated the 2024 news agenda. From the beginning of 2026 a change of tack is being tried, with a reflective blog based on one or two stories replacing the longer digest. This will appear in written and voiced form on our website.

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. Although usually held in the morning we have responded to requests to hold some in the evening and this will continue in 2026. We are always looking for ideas for topics and speakers.

Culture Club: Another opportunity for folk to meet during the year is 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

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.

Christians on Ageing's purpose and role is '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'. Achieving that purpose and living up to that role requires the support and participation of all of our membership. I encourage you to spread the word about CoA and remind you about our Membership leaflet which can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary. Let's try and ensure that copies are available in our local churches.

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

Keith Albans

Communications Committee Report

The Communications Committee has met quarterly in advance of reporting to Executive Committee meetings. Our remit is for external communications such as publications, website, newsletter, members' magazine ('plus') as well as contributing to events such as Conferences, Conference Calls and Culture Club. Increasingly, our methods and quality of publicity have become important in a highly interactive society. We have employed some modest paid input to support management of data bases, mailings and distribution of information and publications.

Our strategy to review and renew our publications list has continued this year, with several classic texts receiving an update and refreshed design: *Dying and Death* received a complete revision by Gerry Burke; *The Spirituality of Ageing* by Metropolitan Anthony had a significant addition on his life and work contributed by Peter Coleman; *Light of Faith: Reflections on Growing Old* by Bishop George Appleton received updating reflections on its original text; *Faith in the Third Age* by Mike Lewis was re-designed for a fresh look. Other older texts were archived but can be supplied on request. Plans and commissions for new titles are underway.

In order to make greater and regular contact with members and a wider online audience we have rescheduled and coordinated external communications such as the Newsletter, Conference Calls and Culture club. *Plus* magazine continued to appear quarterly and latterly has made the move to an updated look for layout, font and full colour. Copy editing has benefitted from the services of a volunteer proofreader / textual adviser. *Plus* content continues to include commissioned articles from contributors of interest and reporting on current trends in good practice concerning senior ministry in its many forms and the response of churches to an ageing society.

Joanna Walker

Older Prisoners Interest Group

The number of older people in prison (over the age of 50: a 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 strengthened the 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 by having a representation on their national core group.

Summary of our actions in 2025

Through direct contact within the Ministry of Justice, we have managed to provide copies of our prayer resource to a large number of prison chaplains at their bi-annual conference last summer. The same resource can also now be accessed through the ‘Prisons in Cells Telephony system’ which is available in some prisons.

A lead member of the Salvation Army delivered an online conference call highlighting the excellent work of the CAMEO project (Come and Meet Each Other).

Through a useful virtual meeting we had with a Manging Prison Chaplain we picked up the implication of the passing of the ‘Assisted Dying Bill’ on prison staff because at present there is no provision for them to opt out from taking part in the implementation phase of this bill in real settings. It is our understanding that the Bishop prison lead for the Church of England has raised this point during a debate in the House of Lords.

A recently published joint ecumenical report under the title of ‘Picking up the Pieces’ was considered by our group but the lack of reference to older prisoners in this report is concerning.

As a group we also have links with a specialist interest group mainly consisting of academics and policy makers with a specific focus of dementia in prisons.

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

Culture Club Report

At Culture Club, we invite anyone, whether a member or not of CoA, to join us for an informal discussion courtesy of Zoom about the ways in which the arts depict an aspect of the lives of older people. Meetings usually take place on Friday afternoons and run for about an hour and a quarter.

Our first meeting of the year, on Valentine's Day, examined the portrayal of romance in later life. First question: can 80-somethings fall in love with the same intensity as when they were 18? Yes, according to the reports of attenders' friends and acquaintances, and the many recorded romance scams involving older people. We recalled the 2004 film *Ladies in Lavender*, in which in which an older woman, played by Judi Dench, falls deeply and touchingly in love with a young Polish man, despite a 50-year age gap.

Despite the doubts of some of us, most attenders considered that online dating is common amongst older people and can lead to happy unions. Nonetheless, the chance encounter is the bread-and-butter of fiction and the big screen – in film, it is known as a “meet cute”. However, the romance sparked by Diane (played by Diane Keaton) in *Book Club* (2018) when she accidentally tumbles into the lap of a handsome fellow passenger on a plane comes to prompt her daughters' fierce disapproval. We discussed the ripples emotional ripples that the new partners of an older parent can set off. One of Keaton's fellow Book-Club members finds love again with her teenage sweetheart. Does a connection forged in youth with someone with a shared history and shared values trump later connections?

Caring for an older friend or relative has always been a very common activity and remains so, while there are more than six million paid carers in the UK. At our meeting in May, we examined the way in which caring is depicted by the arts and concluded that depictions of caring usually differ wildly from the day-after-day, isolated slog of being a carer. Indeed, screen carers of older people are often malevolent. Horrified at the ease with which a woman claiming to be someone's legal guardian dispatches her to a care home and steals her considerable assets in the 2020 film US film *I Care A Lot*, we discussed the extent to which the UK system of attorneys, deputies, guardians and so on offers protection against malevolent carers (both paid and unpaid). Are the connotations of the word 'care' unhelpful? After all, comparable terms like 'parent' and 'teacher' are not freighted with the verb to care.

At our August meeting, we shared thoughts about two books and their associated films. *Conclave*, the highly acclaimed 2024 film about the election of a Pope by a conclave of ageing cardinals and starring Ralph Fiennes, is based on a 2016 political thriller by Robert Harris. Although the conclave finally elects a young man as the next Pope, those members who elect him (with several fighting for the post for themselves) are mainly old. We discussed the way in which older people in real life can be just as ambitious as those younger than themselves and, with their limited time available, more driven. On a lighter note, we went on to discuss Deborah Moggach's 2004 novel *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* and the star-studded film made in 2014 of the same name in which four older people decide to outsource their care needs in retirement to what they are surprised to discover is a dilapidated hotel in India. We discussed whether taking oneself out of one's comfort zone in retirement is a good idea.

Our November meeting saw us discussing Richard Osman's 2020 book *The Thursday Murder Club* and the 2025 film of the same name, in which a small group of residents of a high-end retirement complex called Cooper's Chase aim to solve cold-case homicides that have foxed

the police, as well as real-life murders. First question: would we like to live at Cooper's Chase? Opinions were divided: some considered life there appealing, while others were concerned about fragile tenure and a sense of cliquishness. TMC members were able to carry out their investigations under the radar. We wondered whether their white hair and wrinkles made them seem harmless, even guileless. How did they differ from other older, fictional sleuths, like Agatha Christie's Miss Marple?

In the second half of our November meeting, we turned our attention to the ways in which older people have been and are depicted in adverts. Why should those for disability aids to be bought mainly by older people so often involve much younger, apparently fit people? Why aren't older consumers represented more often in adverts by actors who look the same age? Why when they look their age must this often be in the context of grandparenthood?

You can find fuller accounts of all these meetings (except for August 2025) in *plus*.

Marion Shoard

Membership Report

Membership fell slightly in 2025. At the end of the year, the Council had 102 individual members and 16 members representing organisations.

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.

Our membership leaflet is a useful tool for raising awareness of the work of Christians on Ageing. Executive Committee members use the membership leaflet and spare copies of *plus* to reach out to networks concerned with the wellbeing of older people and this has helped bring in some new members.

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

Barbara Stephens

Financial Report – Treasurer’s Statement

In 2025, we had a total income of £3,574 and total expenditure of £4,872, meaning that we ended the year with a deficit of £1,298. This was due to the cost of holding an in-person conference and Annual General Meeting in York in May. However, this was our first in-person AGM for many years and the first meeting of the members of the Executive Committee because our meetings are now held using Zoom technology, which saves considerable expenditure on travel and the hire of meeting rooms. The conference was both successful and enjoyable.

We have now closed our HSBC bank account and moved to a Charities Account with Co-operative Bank, which we consider to be more ethical and where we will no longer be required to pay bank charges. Experience has also shown that access to customer service is much easier and staff are very helpful. We hope that the change of bank will not adversely affect our income due to a loss of subscriptions from members who do not update their Standing Orders with the new details.

Despite the deficit, the balance sheet remains healthy, and we have been able to budget to continue our programme of updating our publications, possibly commissioning new ones and undertaking some research during the present year.

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 2025

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Christian Council on Ageing for the year ended 31 December 2025.

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 charity'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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act;
or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records;
or
- the accounts did 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

CHRISTIAN COUNCIL ON AGEING
Registered Charity No 283463

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
for the Year ended 31 December 2025

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
<u>Incoming Resources</u>				
Voluntary Income				
Subscription Income - Individuals	1,885		2,229	
Subscription Income - Corporate				
Donations	378		1,827	
Donations to Newsletter				
Credits from Branches				
Tax Credits	290		660	
Legacies			<u>1,000</u>	
		<u>2,551</u>		5,716
Income from Charitable Activities				
Sales	62		100	
Conference Income	<u>110</u>			
		172		<u>100</u>
Investment Income		<u>851</u>		<u>1,017</u>
Total Incoming Resources		<u><u>3,574</u></u>		<u><u>6,832</u></u>
<u>Resources Expended</u>				
Charitable Activities				
PLUS	896		1,050	
DG Newsletter				
Website	156		234	
Branch Expenditure				
Trustees' Travel Expenses				
Printing, Stationery & Advertising	671		561	
Post & Telephone	58		65	
Graphic Design & Artwork			425	
Subscriptions & Insurance	79		302	
Publications Purchased				
Publications Support				
Prayer Books for Prisoners				
Promotional Expenses				
Research				
Donations			150	
Bank Charges	<u>47</u>		<u>66</u>	
		1,907		2,853
Governance				
Trustees' Travel Expenses	569		4	
Meeting Rooms				
Conference	1,734		100	
Examiner's Fee	222		216	
Secretarial Support	440		488	
Other Expenses				
		<u>2,965</u>		<u>808</u>
Total Resources Expended		<u><u>4,872</u></u>		<u><u>3,661</u></u>
Surplus/ (Deficit) for the Year		-1,296		3,171
Funds brought forward		28,948		25,777
Funds carried forward		<u><u>27,650</u></u>		<u><u>28,948</u></u>

CHRISTIAN COUNCIL ON AGEING
Registered Charity No 289463

BALANCE SHEET
as at 31 December 2025

2024			2025	
£	£		£	£
		Current Assets		
745		Prepayments	-	
8,121		Cash at Bank	7,774	
<u>20,298</u>		COIF	<u>20,298</u>	
	29,164			28,072
		Current Liabilities		
		Sundry Creditors	<u>422</u>	
<u>216</u>	216			422
		Net Current Assets		
	<u><u>28,948</u></u>			<u><u>27,650</u></u>
		Represented by:		
	28,948	General Funds		27,650
		Capital Employed		
	<u><u>28,948</u></u>			<u><u>27,650</u></u>

Signed on behalf of the Trustees of Christians on Ageing by:

Revd Dr Keith Albans and Revd Dr Joseph Cortis

15th March 2026

Christians on Ageing is registered with the Charity Commission

Registered Number: 289463 Registered Office: 147 High Street, Ryde PO33 2RE

www.christiansonageing.org.uk