

## ARCHCONFRATERNITY OF ST STEPHEN

### REPORT OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2023

It is with great pleasure, as Chairman of the Central Council, to present our Annual Report for 2023. I would like to thank all who continue to strive at Parish and Diocesan levels to uphold the ideals of the Guild and to thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed on all of us.

This year has been better than the previous as it was completely free from Covid restrictions and normality has returned in most parishes. Numbers attending Mass are still down compared to before the pandemic which also reflects in the number of Altar Servers but rebuilding is in progress and it is hoped the number of servers will eventually return to pre pandemic levels.

The Central Council has continued to meet on line using Microsoft Teams and it is hope that eventually face to face meetings can resume in a place with WIFI facilities so that members who live outside the London area can still take part.

Marc Besford stepped back from the Hon. Secretary's role and Shaun Dias KHS from St Alban's parish in North Finchley was appointed.

Several new Diocesan Directors were appointed during the year. Fr Paul Grady for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, Ian Mullholland for the Diocese of Lancaster and Deacon Tony Strike for the Diocese of Hallam. Clifton and Hexham and Newcastle are currently without Diocesan Directors and efforts will be made for directors to be appointed in these dioceses. The Central Council thanks the former diocesan directors for their services.

It is important that the Guild avails itself of modern media to communicate its activities and promote its aims and objectives. Paul Woodhouse from Lancaster Diocese is the Communications Officer and since his appointment regular postings have been published on the Guild's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages which have been warmly received by those who follow the pages.

Our Treasurer, Quoc-Anh Tran, has worked hard to ensure that our accounts are accurate and ready for independent examination, approval by the membership, and presented on time to the Charities Commission, all of which is done voluntarily.

Goods orders and the income of the Guild have improved compared to the past couple of years while goods orders have increased compared to 2022 they are still down compared to 2018 – 2019. It will take some time to get back to pre-Covid levels but it will be done as parishes recruit more servers.

Fourteen Gold Medals and eight Gold Medals of Merit were awarded during the year which is a welcome increase on the previous year.

Vincent Shalvey the Goods Manager and Fr. Keith Stoakes together with the goods packing team have ensured that any orders received have been processed and posted for the which the Central Council extends their thanks.

Prices for most goods items have had to be increased this year due to the rise in inflation and the cost of raw materials. The price rise for the Enrolment Packs and Silver-Plated Medals have been kept to a minimum but Solid Silver Medals, Solid Silver Medals of Merit, Silver Plated Medals of Merit, Gold Medals and Gold Medals of Merit have had to have substantial price rises to prevent the medals being sold at a loss.

Supplies of Bronze, Silver Plated and Solid Silver Medals that were held up due to the lockdowns have resumed but it will take some time for all deliveries to be received. Another 3000 Bronze Medals were ordered in June 2022.

Vincent Shalvey the Goods Manager and former Treasurer was asked to conduct a review of the Guild bank accounts. It was decided that the Virgin Money savings account would be closed and its money transferred to the Yorkshire Savings Account where there is a larger rate of interest. There were two Yorkshire Accounts and the smaller one was transferred to the larger. This leaves just the Yorkshire and the Barclays accounts.

Safeguarding has always been taken very seriously by the Central Council and Nicola Christmas was appointed the lead for safeguarding matters.

Following on from becoming affiliated to CYMFed the Guild was invited to be a part of Flame 23 Congress at Wembley Arena. during March 2023.

Several Central Council members led by Paul Briers the Hon. President took part and it was considered very worthwhile as the work of the Guild was promoted to a very large audience. It was gratifying to see the Guild logos displayed on the large screens around the arena. The Hon. President was asked to help serve Benediction during the Congress.

The National Mass was held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at Westminster Cathedral. Approximately 250 servers attended and many with their families. They were mainly from Westminster parishes but other dioceses including Brentwood and Lancaster were represented. One server Samuel Rios, travelled from Kentucky U.S.A. to attend the Mass. Bishop John Sherrington, auxiliary Bishop in Westminster was the Principal Celebrant and the Adoremus Choir of Gunnersbury Catholic School led the singing. Thanks are extended to Bishop John and Erol Hui, the school Director of Music and the choir.

Next year the National Mass will be held in Cardiff at St David's Cathedral on a date to be confirmed.

Anthony Ogunseitan is overseeing the long-term project "Moving the Guild Forward". A working/communications group meet regularly and are working on several initiatives. One project the group is currently working on is an accredited altar servers' certificate. It will be a mainly online modular course for Adult Altar Servers and is being organised together with The Maryvale Institute. It is hoped the course will be launched in the not-too-distant future and more information will be published on the Guild's website and social media platforms when available.

Other projects will be updating the website and looking at additional wards for servers including those who have been enrolled in the Guild for 60 years or more.

Thanks are extended to Anthony and all the Communications and Working Group for their very productive work.

The Central Council was hoping to organise the annual Guild Dinner again which has not taken place since February 2020. It has been difficult finding a suitable venue in Central London and it is hoped to hold the dinner again once a venue has been sourced.

There was an increase in diocesan events for Altar Servers during the past year and Central Council members were pleased to attend Masses in Brentwood, Birmingham and Southwark plus social events organised by Brentwood and Lancaster. It is hoped that more dioceses will hold altar Servers Masses and they can be publicised on the Guild website and social media platforms.

The Council welcomes and congratulates the following newly affiliated parishes during 2023:

Sacred Heart	Flitwick	Northampton
St Vicent Ferrer and St Catherine of Sienna	New York	New York U.S.A.

During the year the Council approved the award of the Archconfraternity's Gold Medal to the following for completion of 50 years of serving as enrolled member of the Guild:

John Burnett	Our Lady of Sorrows, Bognor Regis	Arundel & Brighton
Nicholas Bridgewater	Holy Trinity, Newcastle under Lyme	Birmingham
Michael Roche	St Teresa of Lisieux, Lexden	Brentwood
Keith Earnshaw	St Wulstan, Fleetwood	Lancaster
Mark Stephenson	St Columba, Chesham	Northampton
Joseph Ulrich Lyte	Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Wellingborough	Northampton
Ray Radon	Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Wellingborough	Northampton
Michael Cookson	Cathedral Church of Ss Michael and Boniface, Plymouth	Plymouth
Aidan Foy	Corpus Christi, Bournemouth	Portsmouth
Stephen Leigh	Sacred Heart and St Peter, Waterlooville	Portsmouth
Thomas Webber	St Osmund, Barnes, London	Southwark
Peter Stevens	St John the Evangelist and St Andrew, Deal	Southwark
Robert Purcell	St Joseph and the English Martyrs, Bishops Stortford	Westminster
Glenn Sexton	Immaculate Conception and St Joseph, Hertford	Westminster

The Gold Medal of Merit was awarded to the following for completion of 50 years of serving but not necessarily all that time as member of the Guild:

Andrew Gibbons	St Joseph, Stonehouse	Clifton
John Kearney	St Margaret Mary, Birmingham	Birmingham
John Wood	Our Lady and St Hubert, Oldbury	Birmingham
Colin Ffloyd Thurgood	St James the Less and St Helen, Colchester	Brentwood
Paul Davitt	St Francis of Assisi, Liverpool	Liverpool
Austin Todd	St John the Baptist, Annitsford	Hexham and Newcastle
Graham McKenna	St Margaret Clitherow, Keyworth	Nottingham
Patrick Shonfield	Our Lady Star of the Sea, Weymouth	Plymouth

The Council extends its congratulations to recipients of the Gold Medal and Gold Medal of Merit and to all those who received other special awards.

The Central Council continues to be greatly appreciative and supportive of the many servers, priests and parishes throughout the country. Their tireless dedication in upholding the ideals of the Archconfraternity are to be applauded, especially during the time of lockdown restrictions. These high standards of serving, which are a primary objective of the Guild, can only be achieved through daily prayer, encouragement and ongoing training.

Paul Briers  
Chairman of the Central Council  
30<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Some events organised for 2023:

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2.30pm – Westminster Diocesan Mass for Altar Servers in Westminster Cathedral

Archconfraternity of St. Stephen, P.O. Box 568, London WC1A 1YT

Emails: [secretary@guildofststephen.org](mailto:secretary@guildofststephen.org)  
[goodsmanager@guildofststephen.org](mailto:goodsmanager@guildofststephen.org)

Website: [www.guildofststephen.org](http://www.guildofststephen.org) Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/GuildofSaintStephen](https://www.facebook.com/GuildofSaintStephen)  
Registered Charity No. 803021