



The Friends of Ely Cathedral Summer Newsletter 2026



Celebrating 90 Years of Friendship

Summer 2026 Newsletter From the Friends' Office



Welcome to our summer newsletter, I cannot believe we are already halfway through our 90th Anniversary year! As we celebrate this special year, we look back with gratitude and forward with enthusiasm. The support of our members continues to make an enormous difference, helping ensure that Ely Cathedral remains a place of beauty, worship and inspiration for future generations.

Thank You

A heartfelt thank you to all our members for your continued support and for all of you who have paid your subscriptions and offered donations. Please do check your subscription is up-to-date and that you are paying our current rate.

Membership Gifts

Do you know someone who loves Ely Cathedral? Gift Membership remains a wonderful way to introduce new people to The Friends. It makes a thoughtful present and helps grow our community of supporters.

Supporting Ely Cathedral

Thanks to the generosity of Friends, we continue to support important Cathedral projects and initiatives. This year we have already pledged funding for the the refurbishment of the toilets which regular visitors will know will make a huge difference. We also funded some fantastic new exhibition boards that made their debut during the Home & Garden Show.

Looking Ahead

The Friends Office will be quiet in August as I take leave to spend time with family, however we have an exciting programme of activity planned for the coming months and hope to welcome many of you starting with our AGM in September.

Thank you for being a Friend.



Looking Back: A Memorable 90th Anniversary Dinner

On 23 May, Friends gathered to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of The Friends in the Monastic Barn.



The evening was a wonderful opportunity to come together in friendship, enjoy good company and reflect on ninety years of support for Ely Cathedral. Members shared memories, renewed old friendships and celebrated the remarkable achievements of generations of Friends who have helped preserve and enrich Cathedral life since 1936.

The evening began with a drinks reception and exhibition, followed by a fantastic three course meal courtesy of the Kings Catering. After dinner we were treated to a musical interlude from the Cherry Hill Trio and a wonderfully entertaining speech by Lord Wilson.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who attended and helped make the evening such a success. Your support, enthusiasm and goodwill created a memorable occasion and demonstrated the strength of our Friends' community.



Celebrating the Ministry of The Dean

On 28 June, members of The Friends joined the Cathedral community for the service marking the retirement of The Very Revd Mark Bonney as Dean of Ely.



The service was a moving and joyful occasion, giving thanks for Dean Mark's years of dedicated leadership, ministry and service to Ely Cathedral. Throughout his time as Dean he has overseen significant developments in Cathedral life while strengthening its role as a place of worship, welcome and inspiration. He really made this place a happy and thriving community.

Friends were especially delighted to see the clergy wearing the beautiful green vestments gifted by The Friends to mark our 90th Anniversary year. Their use at this important service highlighted the close and enduring relationship between The Friends and the Cathedral and reflected our continuing commitment to supporting its worship and ministry.

We offer our warmest thanks to Dean Mark for all he has contributed during his time at Ely and wish him every happiness and blessing for the future.



Join Us for Friends' Day 2026

2pm, Saturday 12 September 2026

Friends' Day is the highlight of our annual calendar. Whether you are a long-standing Friend or have joined recently, we warmly encourage you to attend it is a chance to meet fellow members, hear about the work of The Friends and enjoy time in the Cathedral. We are excited to share our new Christmas card designs for 2026 for the first time at this AGM. The agenda for this meeting will be available on our website 14 days ahead of the meeting. If you have a motion to propose under Any Other Business, please contact the Friends Office by 18 August.



Programme for the Day

2pm: Annual General Meeting

All Friends are invited to attend the AGM to hear reports on the work of The Friends, review the past year and consider plans for the future. Following the AGM, we will be delighted to welcome our guest speaker, Jasmine Allen, Director & Conservator who will speak on *The Story of the Stained Glass Museum: From Rescue to Recognition*. Free to attend.



3.30pm: Friends' 90th Anniversary Afternoon Tea* in the Lady Chapel

This will be provided by the fabulous Ely Grazing Company and includes fizz, fun and a chance to see our exhibition on 90 years of the Friends.

Prebook by 4 September, Friends £25, Guests £30 at elycathedral.org/friends

**Please advise of any dietary requirements in advance on 01353 660348*

5pm: Friends' Choral Evensong

The day concludes with Choral Evensong in the Cathedral. During the service, the Friends' Chorister Prizes will be awarded, recognising the dedication and achievements of the choristers who contribute so much to the musical life of Ely Cathedral.

Friends' Day Special Offer

Exclusive 10% Discount* in the Cathedral Shop

As a special benefit of membership, Friends attending Friends' Day can enjoy a 10% discount in the Cathedral Shop on the day of the event. Whether you are looking for gifts, books, jewellery, food items or Cathedral-inspired merchandise, Friends' Day is the perfect opportunity to enjoy this exclusive member benefit.



Don't forget to bring your Friends' membership card when shopping

**Excludes stamps and Christmas cards*

Events

Please do check your inbox for regular updates on Friends' events throughout the year



Celebrating 90 Years of Friendship Exhibition 28 September - 9 October, South West Transept

As part of our 90th Anniversary celebrations, we are delighted to present a special exhibition telling the story of our charity and its support for Ely Cathedral over the past nine decades. The exhibition will showcase photographs, documents, memories and highlights from the history of The Friends since our foundation in 1936. Visitors will have the opportunity to discover how generations of Friends have contributed to the preservation, restoration and enhancement of Ely Cathedral through fundraising, volunteering, grants and practical support.

Free to attend

Earth In Our Hands: Breakfast with Professor Julian Allwood 9am, 17 October, North Transept

How do we act meaningfully on climate - not someday, but now? Join Professor Julian Allwood, a leading Cambridge expert on climate mitigation, for a clear-eyed, hopeful conversation about practical climate action that communities and individuals can take today.

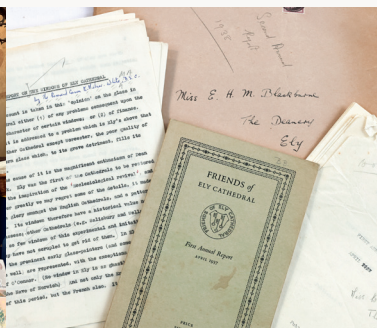
£5 (includes light breakfast*) Book: elycathedral.org/events/earth-in-our-hands

**Please advise of any dietary requirements in advance on 01353 660306*

Ely Cathedral Christmas Gift & Food Fair Thursday 19 - Saturday 21 November

Find us at the Christmas Fair where we will be selling our Christmas cards and other merchandise. Whether you're searching for unique Christmas gifts, meeting friends for festive food and drink, or simply enjoying the season, the Fair offers really memorable start to Christmas.

Book via Cathedral box office



Tours for The Friends

Join us for some Friends' tours

Tickets £6, available via the Cathedral box office

10.30am – 11.30am, Wednesday 9 September

Etheldreda's Legacy: The Monastery that started it all

Come and hear the story of Queen St Etheldreda and the monastery she founded here in Ely. On this tour, you'll hear how Etheldreda established her monastery, what became of the church she built, and how a second church eventually gave way to the Cathedral we see today after the Norman Conquest. As you explore, you'll look out for the traces of St Etheldreda that are still dotted around the building. Binoculars handy!



10.30am – 11.30am, Monday 30 November

Restoring Glory: Ely Cathedral's Victorian Story

Step back 150 years and imagine Ely Cathedral right in the middle of an ambitious restoration programme by Dean Peacock and George Gilbert Scott. Together they set in motion what became the most ambitious restoration of any British cathedral attempted at that time – re-imagining the inside, outside and from top to bottom. Their mission? To repair the damage left by the Reformation and peel away the layers that had built up over the centuries, hiding the beauty of the medieval building.

Could You Spare a Few Hours?

The Friends rely on volunteers whose time, energy and enthusiasm make many of our activities possible. Whether you can help once a year or more regularly, your assistance is always appreciated.

Opportunities Include:

- Join our wonderful team to pack Christmas cards on Monday 7 & Wednesday 9 September in Powchers Hall, email or call the Friends Office to confirm
- Support the Friends' Stall at the Christmas Fair - if you can spare a few hours from the 19-21 November we'd love to hear from you.
- Deliver newsletters and yearbooks locally - dates advertised in January
- Assisting at Friends' events as needed



Volunteering is a rewarding way to meet fellow Friends, support the Cathedral and make a real contribution to the work of the charity. We would love to hear from you.

Friends' Council Vacancies

Could You Help Shape the Future of The Friends?

The Friends' Council plays an important role in guiding the work of our charity and ensuring that we continue to support Ely Cathedral effectively and responsibly. Council members act as Trustees of the charity and help oversee our activities, grants, events, membership and future planning. Serving on Council is a rewarding opportunity to contribute to the life of both The Friends and the Cathedral.

What Does It Involve?

- Attendance at four Council meetings each year
- Supporting Friends' events and activities
- Helping to shape future projects and priorities
- Working with fellow Trustees to promote and develop The Friends

You do not need to live in Ely, but you should be enthusiastic about supporting the work of Ely Cathedral and The Friends. We warmly encourage nominations from members who would like to become more involved.

If you would like to learn more, please contact the Friends' Office or speak to a current Council member.

To self-nominate, please use the link below by Friday 4 September telling us:

- Your professional background and relevant experience
- Any skills or expertise that you feel would be particularly valuable to the Friends
- Why you wish to join the Friends Council

[Click here for the self nomination form](#)

Thank You for Being a Friend

Your membership helps preserve one of England's most remarkable Cathedrals. Every subscription, donation, event ticket, Christmas card purchase and legacy gift contributes towards the ongoing life and work of Ely Cathedral.

Together we are protecting the Cathedral's heritage, supporting its future and ensuring that future generations can continue to experience its beauty, music and ministry.

