Annual General Meeting,
Thursday 25 June, 2026, 6.30pm

Online via Zoom

The draft 2025 Annual Report and the draft 2025 Annual Accounts have been put on the Society's website for you to read. You will be able to find them here https://www.ecclsoc.org.uk/annual-reports.

Agenda

1. To approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Friday, 13 June 2025 and to deal with matters arising.
2. To receive the Report of the Council for the year 2025.
3. To receive the Accounts presented for the year 2025.
4. To elect honorary officers and members of the Council. The following nominations have been received: Chairman, Dr Mark Kirby; Deputy Chairman, Andrew Derrick; Editor of *Ecclesiology Today*, Nick Chapple; Editor of *Church Crawler*, Phil Draper; Secretary, Becky Payne; Reviews Editor & Communications, Paul Gray; Membership Secretary and Website Manager, Graham White; Visits Secretary, Frances Cook; eNewsletter Editor, Zia Simpson.
5. To elect Mark Ockelton as Honorary Auditor (that is, the Independent Examiner of the Society's accounts).
6. To transact any other business, at the Chairman's discretion.

The AGM will be followed by the **Annual Lecture,** this year given by **Rachel Morley,** the Director of The Friends of Friendless Churches. Rachel will speak on **"Blessed be the Bureaucrats for theirs is the kingdom of spreadsheets. Does it matter if another church closes?"**

At a time of increasing pressure on churches, Rachel addresses the questions sometimes asked about whether we have too many churches to sustain. If they've outlived their purpose, if there aren't enough clergy or parishioners, if they're too expensive to run, will anyone really care? Should anyone care? They can't just be preserved for the benefit of elite architectural historians. They must contribute to the economy and provide public utility if they are to justify funding or simply surviving.

Rachel will argue that the way in which we talk about churches and their value is wrong. Churches are a distinct building type, yet many policy-makers and funders treat them like any other historic building. These organisations and their leaders do not have the imagination to understand that values outside of Treasury Green Book might exist, might be important, might be hard to define, difficult or impossible to measure. They do not have the creativity to understand why churches' conception, proliferation,

dedications, materials, craft, permanence, burial practices, etc matter. And because of that, our country, and future, is becoming increasingly impoverished.

She will talk about the structures working against churches, consider why church buildings matter and why they are worth fighting for. She will share specific examples from her work with the Friends of Friendless Churches, and demonstrate how, in a world of spreadsheets, metrics, inertia and decline what the Friends do feels like a tiny act of rebellion – and optimism.

Rachel Morley is a building conservator and Director of the Friends of Friendless Churches, which rescues, repairs and re-opens neglected old churches; under her direction the charity has saved twenty-seven of them. She has served as a judge for the John Betjeman Award for Church Conservation and Repair, and as Chair and Trustee of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. She is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Her book, *Church Crawling: The Secret Lives and Hidden Stories of England's Churches* will be published by Vintage on 3 September 2026.

The Lecture will commence at 7.15pm and is open to both members and non-members. **In order to receive the Zoom link to attend the AGM and the FREE lecture, you will need to register online. It is a single registration for both events. Please go to the Society's website at www.ecclsoc.org.uk and follow the links to the Ticket Tailor booking page.**

You can find out more about the important work of The Friends on their website here: https://friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk/ and in this photo essay: https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2019/dec/15/rescuing-run-down-churches-friends-of-friendless-churches-england-wales-photo-essay