

The Yoga Fellowship of Northern Ireland

Chairperson's Report for AGM - Saturday 26 June 2021

On behalf of the Fellowship and the Committee, I would like to welcome you all here for our 2021 AGM: this will be our forty-third, as a Fellowship community, having missed last year's because of Covid 19.

This has been an unprecedented period for all of us, and our priorities have been to safeguard our physical and mental health and well-being.

For many of us our Yoga practice has been a crucial element in sustaining our well-being, a trusted time-honoured light in the darkness.

Like many other Yoga organisations, we entered the daunting world of Zoom events and workshops; and you will shortly hear from our Secretary, Anne Furgrove, on the Committee's business and the eclectic range of events we arranged since we last met.

I would like to thank the Committee for its hard work and commitment, in particular our Treasurer Eileen Morgan, our Secretary Anne Furgrove and our Membership Secretary Maria Mc Carter.

I single them out because of the extra work involved in organising the Zoom workshops and in the development and trial periods of our new website.

We have always worked as a team, and everyone played their part diligently, especially at times when it was easy to become dispirited - either through personal circumstances or the scale of the challenges in a period of transition and monumental change.

At the last AGM, we found ourselves at a crucial crossroads, in the face of diminishing membership, falling numbers at events and a certain amount of disillusionment. We were forced to have a good look at ourselves, our purpose, our direction, our reason for continuing.

As an organisation, we had not done anything wrong, there was no failure, if anything we were the victims of our own success. A pioneering organisation established over forty years ago to spread the message of Yoga and to promote its benefits and train teachers and

ambassadors of this ancient spiritual science.

Today, Yoga is an everyday part of our culture, taught everywhere, its benefits beyond doubt, and there is a proliferation of teacher- training organisations.

I don't have to give an overview, Margaret O'Neill did that that ably at the last AGM, as you can see from the minutes.

The important thing is that we recognised that being part of the Fellowship, with its not-for-profit communal and visionary ethos was something special in today's competitive world, and worth sustaining.

Many of you told us how much you value that sense of belonging and connection.

We pledged to go forward as a community, a 'sangha' to support and guide our membership and to promote the gift of Yoga 'to enhance physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing'.

This is a worthy aim and with a Pandemic in our midst and widespread physical and mental suffering it has never been so relevant.

I have no doubt that the monthly workshops we have organised since last September, many with an emphasis on well-being is just a start in what we can offer with your support.

However, support is our greatest challenge, and support is the lifeblood of the Fellowship. Without it, it will fade away.

We still need you- now more than ever- to support your Fellowship by volunteering, supporting our events, giving us your creative ideas on going forward, and helping to promote and grow our community.

The Fellowship is its members, and its members are the Fellowship.

May we continue as a community of fellow seekers, in the traditional spirit of service (Seva), sharing (Dana), and fellowship (Sangha).

Om Tat Sat.

Michael McCann

(Chairperson, Yoga Fellowship of Northern Ireland 2019 /2021)

