



Wardens, Court Assistants, Freemen

It is very good to see so many of you here this afternoon and welcome to The Company of Nurses Annual Assembly. In common with many Livery Companies, our Ordinances dictate that the Freedom shall meet in Assembly once a year, when the Master will address the Company. If and when we achieve Livery status and have our own Liverymen, this will become our Common Hall.

We are here today to affirm the election of the new Master, Upper Warden and Middle Warden to the Company. We will also receive a report from the Chair of the Charitable Trust, the annual financial statements from the Renter Warden and consider any matters on which fourteen days notice in writing has been given to the Honorary Clerk. I shall also briefly outline the aims and objectives as contained in our Business Plan, a copy of which has been circulated.

When I became the third Master of The Guild of Nurses, I knew that after four years as a Guild and provided that all the criteria could be met for progression to a Company without Livery, one of the main tasks ahead was to prepare the petition for the Court of Aldermen of the City of London. Part of this involved revisiting the Handbook, which contains the Company's Constitution, Ordinances, Rules, Procedures and the Terms of Reference of the standing committees. I must thank the Immediate Past Master and the Foundation Past Master for all their work on this but it has to be said that we could not have completed (or indeed, even begun!) this body of work without the guidance of the Honorary Clerk to the Company, John Allen.

There were also a lot of other decisions to be taken and I thank the Court for their dedication over at least 6 months of meetings, emails and debate - agreeing points of order, redesigning the logo, ordering new stationary and badges, writing press releases – the list was a long one and everyone worked together in good spirits and with a feeling of anticipation. And all the time, we realised that we could not presume anything, so there was a tension in the air!

Of course, by the time the Court of Aldermen were due to meet to examine our petition, the whole country was in lockdown and so, for the first time in history and, by special dispensation, the meeting was held virtually and on May 12th – that most auspicious of days in the nursing calendar – The Company of Nurses was recognised as a Company without Livery. I congratulate all who have been involved because, without you, we would not have been able to achieve so much in such a short time.

The Company has grown into a sound organisational structure, with a healthy operating fund and a vibrant membership of almost 300 nurses from many backgrounds and training schools and the diversity of the Company is something we can be proud of. But I must tell you that the ambition has not faltered and we will now look ahead to the coming years of growth so that we can fulfill the criteria and so be in a sound position to petition to become The Worshipful Company of Nurses.

To mark 2020 as the year of progression to Company, the WHO International Year of the Nurse and Midwife and the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, a new category of membership has been introduced. This offers Freemen the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the future work of the Company by becoming Bicentennial Freemen. I am so pleased that many of you have decided to support the Company in this way. At the Court meeting this afternoon, I was informed that we can now welcome over 70 2020 Bicentennial Freemen to the Company. I have spoken to many of you over the past few weeks and it is wonderful to hear your enthusiasm for the work of the

Company and your commitment to the journey ahead. As ever, these plans do not come to fruition without some considerable time and effort and so I must thank the members of the Livery sub-committee who worked together over the summer.

Honorary Freeman to the Company include our Sponsoring Alderman Dr Sir Andrew Parmley, our previous Honorary Clerk, Keith Lawrey and today I was very pleased to welcome Dame Sarah Mullally, the Bishop of London as our third Honorary Freeman.

The Court is the governing body of the Company and meets quarterly. The Court is comprised of the Master, Wardens and Court Assistants and order to become a member of the Court, it is necessary to have served on one of the standing committees for a period of time and to have made a commitment to enter the line of succession to Master. I am very pleased to tell you that today I installed 2 new Court Assistants. David and Christine, you are both most welcome.

The Court met for a strategy day at the end of last year to discuss our next goals and devise a business plan to reach them. We will continue to do this every year to ensure that our plans remain relevant and on target. And so I would like to give you a brief overview of the objectives as outlined in this year's Business Plan:

Firstly, to raise public awareness of the nursing profession:

The aims are two-fold; to undertake outreach and career development work in schools through partnership with the Livery Schools Platform and 2 educational charities, 'Speakers for Schools' and 'Inspiring the future' and also to secure volunteers from within the membership to promote the nursing profession in schools and provide career advice to students. In addition, together with our partners in the Health Liveries Group, we can address topical healthcare issues and the complex role of nurses today.

Secondly, to promote and contribute to the Charitable Trust:

I need not say anything more here as you will be hearing from the Chair of the Trust in this regard.

To promote and uphold the nursing profession and its standards of excellence and integrity:
An implementation strategy regarding the provision of coaching and mentoring has recently been drawn up. The aim is to identify and accredit coaches and mentors from within the Company and to provide this service to those Freemen and Apprentices who wish to receive support in this way.

To provide for the meeting in fellowship of those who join the Company:

We recognise the aim to build further opportunities for networking and friendship, particularly by engaging with younger Freemen, given the time constraints on the working members. Interest has been shown in visiting venues both within and outside London, especially those that have some connection with the nursing profession.

And last but by no means least, to support the Mayoralty and the Aldermen:

With regard to the guidance outlined in the recent report from the Pan Livery Steering Group regarding internal and external communications, the Company will work to raise our profile and inform both our membership and the public at large about our values and ethos. Through the involvement of a healthcare related group, as previously mentioned, the Company shall support the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs by providing information and advice on health issues and give freely of our experience and expertise in the field of healthcare.

The Court members are to be commended for their help with the "Listening Ears" scheme which I initiated at the start of the lockdown period in the Spring. Having identified those Freemen who were having to self-isolate, we made contact with over 70 of our Freemen to lend support and make sure that all was well. The Almoner to the Company, Rosemary Ray kept us on track and organised! Thank you Rosemary.

At the same time, we received offers of help from some of our Freemen to act as "buddies" to frontline nurses who were working such long hours in very difficult conditions and Court Assistant Hilary Andrews, was good enough to coordinate this.

All those on the Court are busy people and many were redeployed or asked to return to work during the pandemic - the Company is exceptionally fortunate to have a gathering of such talent. I must thank them for their time, given freely and without question and I have been enormously grateful for their support during my time as Master.

The teams of volunteers who make up the standing committees deserve a very special mention and I thank each and every one of you for your hard work. Over the past 17 months we have welcomed several new members onto each of our committees and you know that you are most welcome. All committees – Membership, Social, Education & Professional Development, Communications and Finance & General Purposes have continued their work virtually since the end of March and adapted well to the changes that have been required.

In addition to these, a new committee, the Nomination committee, has been formed this year and is responsible for succession planning, recommending new members for the Court and as chairs of standing committees and other offices. The chair is the Immediate Past Master and the committee includes the chairs of the other standing committees. There have been 4 meetings since its inception in February.

The Nomination committee would like to hear from any Freeman who feels able to give time to serve on a committee of the Company and we are also looking for someone to fulfil the role of Archivist - a job description is available from the Honorary Clerk for anyone who might be interested.

The Membership Committee continues to do an enormous amount of work to ensure that all membership enquiries receive a speedy response and that our membership records are accurate and stored safely. For many of our Freemen, this committee is their first point of contact and is vital to the continuing success of the Company. In order to make sure that the membership application process runs smoothly and efficiently, the team meet monthly to discuss the most recent applications and work closely with the Clerk's office.

The Social Committee continues its sterling work in organising a huge and varied social programme to suit a wide range of interests for our Freemen – we have enjoyed so many formal and informal gatherings and this year the virtual events have proved very popular with all our Freemen – particularly the quiz and the wine-tasting which led us on a tour down the Loire. The latest receptions for our new Freemen to make their declarations have

also been conducted using Zoom and make for an intimate and moving occasion – of course one advantage is that our declarants from overseas have been able to join us with ease.

The Education and Professional Development Committee is progressing outreach work into schools and colleges to engage with young people in career choices, via the Livery Schools Platform and continues to organise educational and developmental events for the membership. The first virtual evening lecture was held last week and I know there are more planned for more next year. Participants enjoy the networking opportunities and registered nurses can utilise attendance at the events for their required re-validation with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

The Communications Committee played a particularly important role in May of this year and has also worked on the productions of The Lamp and Mailchimp messages. They manage the Facebook account, while the Foundation Past Master is our expert on Twitter. You will understand the enormous amount of work involved at the beginning of the year, in particular the redesigning of the website to reflect the new status of the Company. At this point I must thank our web-master Col Stephen Oxlade of New Valley Web Design for all his work on our behalf. We very much value his efficient, patient input.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee comprises of the Founder Wardens with the Renter Warden in attendance and is responsible for oversight of the Company's finances, administration and development. As with all the other Standing Committees, it reports to the Court.

I know that many of you will have cause to join me in thanking the Honorary Clerk to the Company, John Allen, who has been a source of experience, expertise and wise counsel to us all and has always been there to keep me on track. In the Clerk's office, John is ably assisted by Kerry Hamer-Nel whose help and support has also been so important to us. The Beadle to the Company, Martin Whitehead has been with us from the beginning and again, his experience and advice has been much appreciated. .

I am now going to ask the Chair of the Company of Nurses Charitable Trust Fund, Brenda Griffiths to talk to you regarding the work of the Trust.

I am now going to ask the Renter Warden, Elizabeth Bardolph to address the annual financial statements and to take any questions in this regard.

The Livery movement has been particularly supportive and helpful to me as Master and I received many wonderful messages following the progression to Company on May 12th. Special mention must go to those Worshipful Companies who, together with The Company of Nurses, make up the Health Liveries group. The Society of Apothecaries, and the Barbers', Cutlers' and Spectacle Makers' Companies all showed their support of our petition to the Court of Aldermen by writing letters of commendation. The Health Liveries have also arranged educational seminars and I know that they were very well received by our members.

As Master, I have participated in some moving and wonderful events and been treated to most generous hospitality. The Florence Nightingale Commemoration service at Westminster Abbey, laying a wreath at the tomb of Florence Nightingale at East Wellow church, the service for the Clergy Support Trust at St Paul's, the ceremony to commemorate Edith Cavell and planting a cross on behalf of the Company in the Garden of Remembrance at St Paul's – all these are experiences that I will remember for a long time. I have also attended some most fascinating lectures organised by other Livery companies and met many interesting Liverymen from varied backgrounds. It was a particular pleasure to meet some of those who supported the foundation of the Guild over 4 years ago and be able to thank them. At the Court dinner in January, we were able to reciprocate some of the hospitality shown and I hope we shall continue this tradition in the years to come.

Over the past 17 months, the Company has made donations to the Lord Mayor's Appeal, the United Guilds Service Trust, the Cavell Trust and the Royal British Legion. Most recently, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the NHS Livery Kitchens Initiative was set up to provide

hot food for the many staff working on the frontline and the Company was very pleased to be able to donate to this most worthy cause.

Our credibility and awareness amongst nurses is increasing and other bodies who share our desire for long term charitable, benevolent and educational sustainability are approaching us in growing numbers, seeking the security that the inclusion of our profession in the livery movement can offer.

It goes without saying that serving as Master of the Company of Nurses has been an enormous privilege and I have tried to express my admiration for the work and dedication of the nursing profession.

At my installation banquet, which now seems to belong to another age, I spoke of how our ties go deeper than mere fellowship and these last few months has brought that home. Along with many others, I must confess to feeling helpless, frustrated at not being 20 years younger and so unable to roll my sleeves up and help, but I do count myself very fortunate to have been in touch with so many wonderful nurses and it is humbling to hear the stories of the fantastic work you are doing.

I thank you and all the Freeman of the Company of Nurses and the Livery movement of the City of London for the opportunity to represent the nursing profession in this way.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Turnbull