

## **Interview with the new Lord Prior**

**On 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008 The Order of St John formally welcomed its new Lord Prior, Professor Anthony Mellows in an Installation ceremony at The Priory Church in London. Gemma Mullick from the Order Secretariat speaks to Professor Mellows to find out more about his new role and his future hopes for the Order.**

### **What is the Order of St John?**

The Order of St John traces its origins back 900 years to the Knights Hospitaller from whom we derive the inspiration and maxims – *Pro Fide Pro Utilitate Hominum*, 'For the Faith and in the Service of Humanity.'

The Order of St John is an Order of Chivalry of the British Crown. Her Majesty The Queen honours individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the work of the organisation, by awarding membership, at different grades, in the Order. The Order currently has 21,000 members worldwide.

Today, the Order of St John is a major international charity primarily led by volunteers, which is providing first aid, health care and support services in 42 countries around the world. The Order's charitable activities are delivered through its two Foundations: the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem and St John Ambulance worldwide - with volunteers and staff numbering over 250,000.

### **Describe your position of Lord Prior**

Ultimate authority over the Order of St John lies with the HM Queen Elizabeth II, as the Sovereign Head of the Order, and by HRH The Duke of Gloucester, as Grand Prior of the Order. The Lord Prior of the Order of St John is the most senior non-Royal member of the organisation.

### **What are your key responsibilities?**

The Lord Prior of St John is the principal adviser to The Grand Prior and acts on his behalf when he is not available, including at events and Order occasions. Subject to the Sovereign Head and The Grand Prior, he is the head of the Order in its aspect as an Order of Chivalry.

The Lord Prior provides leadership of the Order in its charitable activities by promoting policy and presiding at meetings of the Order's Grand Council and other worldwide governing bodies – as well as seeking to maintain the ethos and traditions of the Order.

The Lord Prior does not take part in the day-to-day running of any St John Establishment, but visits as many of them as frequently as possible.

### **What's your future vision for the Order?**

Many people are involved in the caring activities of St John around the world and I want them to feel that they are part of one organisation, that there is 'One St John'. It shouldn't matter if they are a uniformed volunteer in a division of St John Ambulance; a full time First Aid trainer or a doctor at the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem – they are all vital to the work of St John.

To create such a feeling, depends on knowledge of what we are all doing, and knowledge depends on communication. Therefore I see a considerable emphasis being placed on communication in the coming years.

We are all naturally concerned with our own particular activities and the community we serve. I want people to see that our community is much wider than we may think. It goes beyond our own village, town or city; indeed it may extend to a different continent. I will seek to encourage an attitude of not being concerned solely with our own immediate environment, but of always looking outwards - looking beyond ourselves.

Lastly, St John needs to be constantly vigilant and to stand back and see what the real needs of the community we serve are and then look to see how best we can meet those needs. By doing this we can ensure we are always evolving and moving forward.

### **What is it about the Order of St John that makes it such an important and unique organisation?**

The Order is unique in the sense that it encompasses three aspects; one as an Order of Chivalry; another as a Christian Order and also as a modern international charity. Today, the Order continues to be a Christian Order but I should stress that it is a Christian Order which is not in the slightest bit exclusive - but one which warmly welcomes those of any faith or of no faith, who are motivated to share in its work.

St John will always be a care-giving organisation and in giving that care it earns trust. History has shown us that this trust enables St John to work in places where others cannot go, and to do things which others cannot do. I believe the organisation has a remarkable potential for reconciliation – by providing care to all of those in need, without discrimination. Examples which come to mind are St John in South Africa during apartheid and in the Troubles in Northern Ireland. More recently St John was very active in supporting those affected during conflicts in Sri Lanka and Kenya as well as the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem which continues to care for Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities.

I think it is very rare to find an organisation that is able to embrace and cherish its long history while still continuing to provide a vital role to communities in this ever changing world. Even more incredible is the idea that the majority of the organisation's charitable activities are to this day still carried out by dedicated and skilled volunteers.

### **Tell us a bit more about you...**

Professionally I was an academic lawyer, as a Professor of Law in the University of London as well as being a practitioner as the senior partner in a law firm in one of the Inns of Court. Before that I served as a Reserve Officer in the Intelligence Corps and on the General Staff.

I am married to Elizabeth, who is also very actively involved in the work of the Order and is a member of the Order in her own right. We live in London.