

President's Letter

Dear Franconians,

The November Newsletter always comes out far too early for me to send you best wishes for the Christmas octave from our Board and Committee. Nevertheless, I do hope that you all had a happy and peaceful Christmas with family and friends, wherever you spent it, and were able to enjoy the many moments of kindness and love which go to make up the true meaning of Christmas.

What I can do in the January Newsletter, though - as close to the event as possible – is to wish you and your families a very happy New Year, 2025: a year which will hopefully bring with it contentment, good health and happiness for you all on a personal level - and for all nations, the chance for them to live together in peace and friendship in a world where justice and tolerance prevail.

Looking back on 2024, a year which many people would prefer to forget, since it was dominated in many parts of the world by war, conflict and the violation of human rights, we shouldn't overlook the fact that there were a number of events such as the Olympic Games and the European football championships which showed that harmony and friendship between nations is also possible. And what about moving events such as the cooperation between people from different nations which enabled the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, one of Europe's most imposing works of architecture, to be rebuilt in record time – or a change of attitude and political affinity in a group of people, which then enabled one of the world's cruelest dictatorships to be toppled? From all these happy and harmonious events we can derive the hope for 2025 that change in the world is not unlikely or even impossible to achieve.

For the Franconian Society we are certain that 2025 will be a happy, harmonious year, but one in which a certain degree of change will also be necessary. Of course we will still have all the popular events everyone enjoys so much: our Games and Pub Quiz evenings, our summer Stammtisch evenings 'Under the Oak Tree', our traditional Dinner Club event at Erlangen's Kirchweih and our Christmas Potluck meal. There will also be a number of internal and external speakers at some of our Stammtisch evenings: Frank Gillard in February to talk about his trip to Southern India, Frau Dr. Hobeck from Tigerauge in March to tell us something about the work done by this children's hospice initiative for Northern Bavaria and Dr Haberkamm in May, who will be talking about an aspect of Franconian dialects – to name just a few of our planned speakers for this year. It is very important that our speakers have the support of an interested audience and a good turn-out when they give their talks, so please make a note of these talks in your diaries.

But in the winter months, as you will have already noticed, our Dinner Club events have been changed to lunchtime to make it easier for those who prefer not to go out after dark, or when the weather is bad, to attend these events. Teresa will give you a list of venues and dates for the next three months in a

separate article in this Newsletter. For the same reason, I will be offering a programme of afternoon activities from January to April. These are not to be seen as a substitute for our evening programme, but as an alternative opportunity for you to engage in Franconian Society activities until it is light for a little longer and the weather is more clement. I will be sending a mail around very soon with a list of dates and activities.

At our next Committee Meeting, we will also be discussing the possibility of the Franconian Society contributing a little more to activities and projects already running in Erlangen, the town in which our Society meets and in which many of its members live. With a slowly ageing membership, it seems more sensible to concentrate our activities on where they could be needed locally – another change for the Franconian Society! Ideas for this suggestion must first be collected and thought through, and we must see whether we have the capacities to do something like this. We will keep you posted on any developments there might be in this direction.

And now all that remains for me to do is to thank you all for the many years of support you have given our Society, and for the many, different ways in which you do this. We are more than grateful and we look forward to your continued support in this New Year and to seeing you at our varied events in 2025.

With every good wish – and please take care,

Bridget Ineichen