



Registered Charity No. 1172186

Summer Newsletter 2017

Chair's Farewell



On Easter Monday, Bishop Michael Perham (*left*), who as Bishop of Gloucester was our President for five years, died after a short retirement. Those who came to our annual meetings will remember that he always gave thoughtful and thought-provoking reviews of where the Church of England was up to—a wide sweep of contemporary issues rooted in a deep spirituality and a clear understanding of its historic mission. We mourn his passing and pray for Alison, his widow.

You will see further on the report that I gave at the Annual meetings held this year on June 6th at Bishopthorpe and on June 20th at Exeter. After five years, I decided that it was the moment to hand over to someone who has a closer and more up-to-date understanding of where the Church of England is moving and closer ties to the present episcopate.

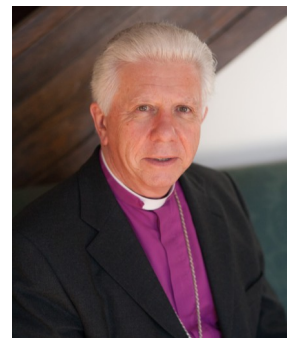
I am delighted that our President has appointed Bishop Ian Brackley as Chair of the Association. He will take over on June 20th, and will bring much to our work. Thank you for your friendship, support and encouragement over the past five years.

+David Jennings

Chair's Greeting

Dear Friends,

It's a real privilege to be taking on this important role and I ask for your prayerful support as I assume the mantle which Bishop David Jennings has so splendidly worn these last five years. He has brought great energy and experience to the role and grown a vision for the Association which will bear fruit in the Development Plan as it rolls out over the next few years. We are enormously in his debt and thank him for his assiduous care of the Association.



I retired in September 2015 having spent the previous 20 years as the Suffragan Bishop of Dorking in Guildford diocese. During that time I worked with three diocesan bishops and also covered the vacancy in Portsmouth diocese in 2009-10. Prior to that I was in parochial ministry for 15 years in Chichester diocese. I have also been a school chaplain in Salisbury diocese and began my ministry in a large post-war housing estate in Bristol. My wife, Penny, and I now live in Petersfield, Hampshire. These last eighteen months have been a time of adjustment and reassessment for both of us, but I think we are getting there!

I look forward to meeting many of you as I begin this new and exciting, increasingly important, ministry in retirement. We retired clergy make up a third of all the ordained in the Church of England and we have much still to contribute and to share in the places where we live and minister.

With every blessing, *+Ian Brackley*

A Cheshire Lazarus

I was visiting Years 1 and 2 to meet the bride and groom in advance of the annual pretend wedding.

I told the bride (age 8) and her father (age 7) that the driver (the local funeral director) would arrive to pick them up in the limo at 1.30 and that I'd meet them in church.

'Which church is that?' piped up one of the (13) bridesmaids.

'Opposite the little park and the bus stop,' I said, 'on the main road.'

'Oh,' said one of the (9) groomsmen. 'You mean the one next door to Sainsbury's?' (Bringing home to me the fact that when we sold the church hall and it became a supermarket, it was Sainsbury's putting us on the map, not we them.)

'Sainsbury's,' said a boy at the back, a tiny fellow of indeterminate function in the coming festivities, 'My grandpa used to take me there.' All eyes turned on him.

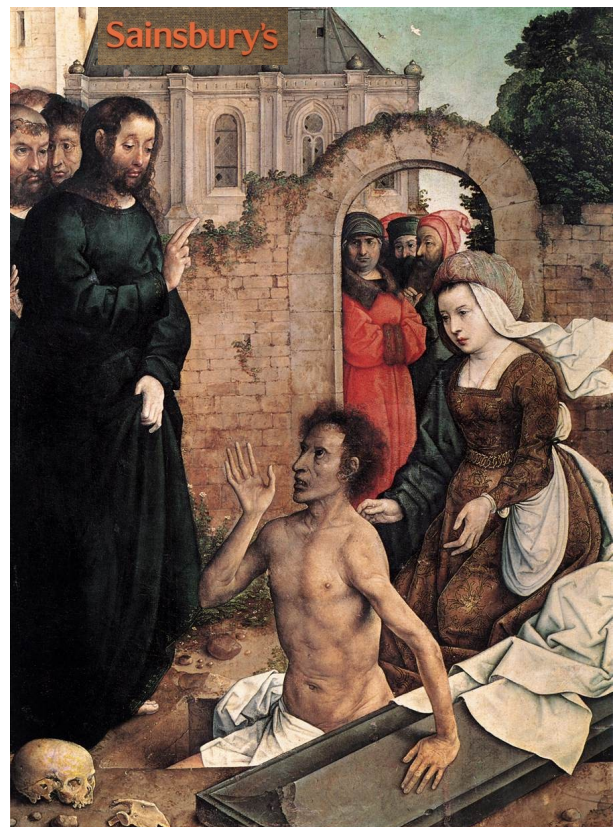
'And then he died,' he said.

There was a general intake of breath. The teacher and I switched into pastoral mode.

One or two of the girls may have raised their hands to their mouth.

The little lad was clearly gratified. He apparently hadn't anticipated what a success he'd make with this contribution. So he nodded his head slightly, made a line of his lips, and then repeated the affecting phrase. 'And then he died.'

A blond head in the front row whipped round, and a surprised voice said, 'What, again?'



Please send material for the Christmas Newsletter, before the end of October, to robin.isherwood@thecharterhouse.org .

Our Newsletter contains I would like to think a fair bit of useful information. I wonder if there are any readers who'd like to contribute in a way that would make it a bit more than a noticeboard. I'd be most grateful for thoughtful articles of up to 900 words - and also for any shorter pieces, perhaps of the type offered above, from my own experience.

Chair's Report



2016 was an important year for the Association. As this is my last report it will also spill over into the first months of this year.

I want to express my thanks to John Ablett for his membership of the Council in the last three years representing the Dioceses of Winchester, Portsmouth and Guildford and to Alan Wolstencroft for the many years that he represented the North West dioceses on the Council, for all the wisdom that he brought to our discussions.

It has been a real encouragement to welcome so many new members to the Council in the last eighteen months - David Crowhurst (West Midlands), Nick Feist (NW), Malcolm Liles (E Midlands), David Pritchard (East Anglia) and Robin Isherwood (London and Southwark).

The ordinary work of the Council has continued with meetings at the Pensions Board twice a year where there is robust conversation about repairs to houses, the CHARM scheme and Target rents. We continue to press for the clergy to have as much information as possible when choosing where to live in retirement.

We have also been meeting with the Ministry Division of the Archbishop's Council to hear about issues which affect retired clergy and to make points that are constantly raised by retired colleagues.

Last September I met with the Diocesan Secretaries Liaison Group to press with the matter concerning fees, and asking that retired clergy are kept up-to-date with the changes in the law in regard to marriage.

I have recently written to all Diocesan and Area Bishops with a list of questions for them to address at their staff meetings. These include the way retired clergy are kept up-to-date with the vision of the diocese, and whether they have access to Continuing Ministerial Training - so important when so many services are taken by ourselves every Sunday of the year. We must be helped to keep fresh. I have also asked if the Bishop pays, or will pay, for each priest at the point of retirement to join this Association. I am looking forward to the replies!

But the two key things that have happened this year are these:

In March 2017 we received Charitable Status. This is the result of nearly five years' negotiation with the Charity Commission, first under Owen Barraclough our former Vice Chair, and more recently under Malcolm Grundy, our present Vice Chair. This has now been approved and will allow us to seek other funds to enable the work of the Association to expand - all in the service of those who are retired.

The second matter is this: if we were going to gain Charitable Status, we needed to be clear about our work and what we wanted to do in the future.

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After wide discussion with the Council over about 18 months, in October last year we finally agreed our Development Plan. Out of this have come five people taking on different aspects of our work - Robin Isherwood, the Newsletter; David Lewis, the website; Frances Wookey, publications; David Pritchard, relations with Ministry Division; Malcolm Grundy, fundraising.

It will take time to move all this on, but what we have done in our 90th year is to set a direction for the work which will be of great benefit to our members in the years to come.

I want to thank His Grace the Archbishop of York for hosting us each year at Bishopthorpe - for the Eucharist and sermon, the lunch, and the address before the Annual meeting. It is so much appreciated. I want to thank our President, Bishop Robert, for having us in Exeter and for his support over the last three years. I thank the Council for really shaping up to the new way of working, where each member takes on some particular responsibility. I thank David Phipps, who over the past five years has worked tirelessly for us, produced minutes of meetings, kept our finances in order, been in contact with hundreds of retired clergy who are in need of some sort of guidance or help, and chased up possible new members. A great computer whizz himself, he has been very tolerant of a Chair who is not! Lastly I want to thank Malcolm Grundy for all his work on the Charitable Status, the Development Plan and his personal support to me.

You are greatly blessed to have Bishop Ian as your new Chair. Please pray for him and support him.

+ David

Online Tax Returns

Our thanks to Peter Lawley for the following information ...

It is now possible to file Tax Returns direct with HMRC and securely via the *Which?* consumer group. Check it out at <http://www.which.co.uk/money/tax-calculator>

The service is free for existing members of *Which?* but non - members can use it for only £29.00 once registered.

It is now possible to file Tax Returns direct with HMRC

Ordinarily Ministers of Religion cannot file on-line with HMRC and have to complete the paper self - assessment form. However, *Which?* in conjunction with *Simply-Tax* will do all the filing for you, and calculate the tax due. The taxation categories are all the same as on the paper form, and there are prompts to guide you as you go along, and to inquire if you have left anything out.

It's all approved by HMRC, and once completed, the tax due is calculated, and your identity verified with HMRC via the personal details of your NI number and unique tax reference (UTR) and off it goes. If you already have a Government Gateway identity created, you don't even have to await confirmation of figures from any P60 returns, as ordinary income from pensions and any Chaplaincy employment is already shown on your own Income Tax page in real time.

The Pensions Board will be electing new members this autumn. Any retired stipendiary clergyperson may apply for nomination/election to the Board. See <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/cepb/theboard/operations.aspx>.

Manormead

We reported in the Easter Newsletter on the difficulties facing clergy residential care homes. Particular mention was made of the fund-raising efforts of St Barnabas', and the decision to close the nursing wing at Manormead.

Not surprisingly, the news of this pending closure was ill-received by retired clergy, especially by those currently living at Manormead and those whose spouses and relatives were in the dementia wing or who had been expecting to move into it.

Out of the discontent associated with the closure has arisen the Manormead Coordinating Committee. Its convenor, Peter Chapman, has written to RCACoE. He contends that the decision to close the Nursing Home so soon after the two Dementia Care Wings were opened (in 2010 and 2013) represents a reversal of the Church of England Pensions Board 's vision to provide progressive care for elderly, retired clergy and spouses in a supportive community'. Mr Chapman's view is that the closing of the Nursing home, and its suddenness, must have been driven by something other than the management issues cited by Jonathan Spencer, Chairman of the Pensions Board.



Mr Chapman speculates that there is an underlying financial cause for the closure, relating to the banking crisis of 2008.

Whatever the chain of events, it's clear that a decision made in a London office has caused distress in Surrey. At the heart of the Manormead Coordinating Committee's concern is the feeling that in the process adopted by the Pensions Board there were elements of 'secrecy' and 'paternalism'. There was no sign of a 'responsibility to consult, seek and receive information and advice'. Mr Chapman maintains that the closure 'could have been planned, and carried through, in a far more humane way, with less damage to the Church of England's credibility'. He calls for 'the vision embodied in Manormead to be refreshed and renewed' in accordance with 'the human values for which 'being church' stands'.

Philip Welsh writes on the following pages about some of the issues he's been facing since retiring. I've met another retired priest - a *Qu Anglican* (a Practising Anglican who's also a Quaker) - who's also working on his understanding of ordination and laity from a new perspective. I'm hoping to report on his progress in the next edition of this newsletter. I trust it goes without saying that any responses to these articles are most welcome.

Ed

Rejoining the Laity

After forty good years of ordained ministry, largely in parishes, in the year since I've retired I have not presided at the Eucharist and I have scarcely preached. I find that I don't miss it, though it was such a central and defining part of what I did and of who I was before. I still enjoy being opinionated about those who are officiating in church, but I don't wish I was standing there myself. What lies behind this is the conviction that the proper place to preside and to preach is within a pastoral relationship with a community of faith, a community to which you have been called in order to be a priest for them.

Any parish priest knows that preaching to your own congregation is completely different to preaching as a visitor, and generally far more rewarding. And most congregations, though they will enjoy a visitor's special contribution from time to time, will reserve a particular value for the possibly routine preaching of their own minister, simply because he or she is their own minister – 'I know my own *and my own know me*'. There is a dynamic in the relationship. It doesn't only shape what the preacher chooses to say, but the way in which it will be heard, as the congregation construes what you say against the way they already know you, and the way they know that you know them. The fact that they are more likely to get your jokes stands for a lot.

In this sense preaching is an aspect of presiding, an embodiment of the covenant relationship between a community of faith and the person called to be their priest. In the Church of England you cannot be ordained without a 'title', an appointment to a Christian community whose priest or deacon you are to be.

To be ordained is not to be given an indelible individual character, but to be placed in a relationship with a worshipping community that validates your priesthood, that 'entitles' you. This isn't an Anglican quirk, but rooted in Catholic tradition: 'A fundamental consequence of the canon of Chalcedon was that a minister who for any personal reason ceased to be the president of a community *ipso facto* returned to being a layman in the full sense of the word.' (Edward Schillebeeckx)

So being a priest is *transitive*, like one of those verbs that has to have an object. You cannot be a priest if you are not a priest for somebody. You're more of a verb than a noun.

Retirement offers the chance to rejoin the church's principal order of ministry, the laity, to which we were ordained at our baptism. Thank the Lord we don't have to go through another selection process, for which we may no longer be the strongest candidates. But that doesn't mean that there will be no testing, some of which may come upon us unexpectedly. I need to learn again how to worship, now that it no longer means leading the service. I need to adjust to invisibility, now that I am no longer identifiable in a public role and with a prominent identity within the church. Staying for coffee I rediscover what it's like to be shy.

I need to find a new way to say my daily prayers, now I haven't got a church next door, and nobody's expecting me turn up. I have a lot to learn from those fellow members of the church who have faithfully found a rhythm for prayer within their secular life.

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Addressing what it means to be a priest without a cure soon becomes a more personal challenge, as it brings before us the simple, unsettling question of who we are now, now that we no longer have the role and status that has properly shaped so much of our life. And if it feels unnatural or – God forgive us – unwelcome to embrace being a lay Christian again, that may say a good deal about the frequently condescending clericalism that bedevils the church, not least among those who have spent years preaching about lay ministry but losing touch with who they are when they are not being the vicar.

It's quite possible, of course, that I am just being selfish in not seeking to help where I can. But I don't want the fear of being thought selfish or irresponsible to take away this precious opportunity to turn – or strictly to return – to a different way of living as a Christian and of serving the gospel, both inside and outside the church. Inevitably there will be an occasion from time to time when it makes sense to step out from my usual place in the pews and officiate. But it will be important for me to be clear that this is not characteristic – as if I ought periodically to reclaim a priestly identity – but an exception to what is now my proper vocational default setting as an ordained member of the laity.

Philip Welsh

Philip is a retired priest in the diocese of London. Formerly he was Vicar of St. Stephen's, Rochester Row, Westminster. A longer version of this piece originally appeared in the *Church Times*. We are grateful for permission to reproduce it.

God keepeth it

I was recently interviewed by a young woman who's collecting oral data on the theme of death and dying for a Roman Catholic charity, The Art of Dying Well. She asked me if there's any material I've found particularly helpful, and I read her the following extract from Mother Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*.

*Our Lord showed me a little thing,
the quantity of a hazel-nut,
in the palm of my hand...*

*I looked thereupon
with eye of my understanding
And thought: What may this be?*

*And it was answered generally thus:
It is all that is made.*

*I marvelled how it might last,
For methought it might suddenly
have fallen to nought for littleness.*

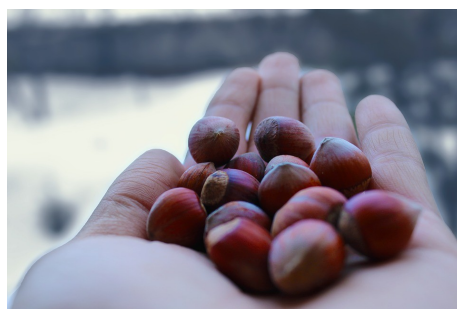
*And it was answered
in my understanding:
It lasteth and ever shall last
for that God loveth it.*

*And so All-thing hath the being
by the love of God.*

*In this little thing I saw three properties.
The first is that God made it;
the second is that God loveth it;
the third that God keepeth it.*

It would be good if we could use a column of this newsletter to share texts we've found helpful either in pastoral or liturgical situations or in private.

Ed



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Council Vacancy

A vacancy exists on the Council for a member to represent the **Dioceses of Guildford, Portsmouth and Winchester**.

Council meets twice-yearly at London Diocesan House in March and October. Email secretary@rcacoe.org for further details of what will be involved.

Nominations, supported by a proposer and seconder, from members currently living in one of these dioceses should reach secretary@rcacoe.org **by the end of August**.



Email or Snail Mail?



Over 1900 members now receive their Newsletters in colour by email, saving us time and expense. If your letter has come by snail mail and if you have an email address, please send it to secretary@rcacoe.org

Items for the next Newsletter should be sent to Robin Isherwood at revslob@gmail.com **before the end of October 2017**. Reaction to anything in this Letter, or news of your own activity, or of your retirement group will be most welcome.

Please note that the views expressed in this newsletter are those of the writer or of the person cited and not those of the RCACoE.