

## From the outgoing Chair



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It's time for me to say good-bye as my five-year term as Chair of the Retired Clergy Association comes to an end with the AGM this November (see more details of this elsewhere in the Newsletter). Colin Fletcher, formerly bishop of Dorchester (Oxford Diocese), succeeds me and I know he cares deeply about the work and purpose of the RCA and will be a resourceful and diligent Chair. He has already introduced himself and his letter to you follows mine.

### A Game of Two Halves

It has been an extraordinary time! From 2017 when I took over from David Jennings to 2019 it was what we used to call 'normal'. Then Covid struck so that from 2020 to the present we have been in a different world. No longer were we able to hold face-to-face Council Meetings, nor our regular meetings with the Pensions Board and the other National Church Institutions, nor our AGMs. Like many organisations we resorted to Zoomed meetings which have served us well: but they take a bit of getting used to, and are never quite the same as when others are physically present to interact with. Nonetheless, thank goodness for modern technology! I never thought I would find myself saying that! Thank God, and Thank You!

As if Covid were not enough we now find ourselves living in turbulent times with real concern about peace in Europe, the worrying increase in the cost of living and seeming political chaos in government. Yet despite all this I have to say I remain hopeful and trustful in the goodness and grace of God and so grateful for the beauty of this world and the privilege of continuing ministry in retirement. Last year I celebrated 25 years as a bishop and this year 50 years as a priest: so much to be grateful for. And I want to thank you all for your prayerful and encouragement over these last five years. It has meant so much to me.

Having just mentioned the difficult times we are in, I have been assured by the Pensions Board that they intend to write to us all before Christmas this year (postal strikes and other unforeseen circumstances permitting) to give us an early indication of the increase in pension we may expect in 2023. I must say that I continue to be impressed with the care and concern shown by the Pensions Board. They are fully aware that things are not easy for many retired clergy at present.

I can think of no better way to end than to recall the words of a former United Nations Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold, whose last words written in his journal before he was killed in an air-crash were: 'For all that has been, thanks. For all that is yet to come, yes.'

+ Ian

**+Ian Brackley All Saints tide 2022**

## Our incoming Chair the Rt Revd Colin Fletcher writes:

As I, like millions of others, watched the funeral of our late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, what struck me, amongst many other things, was how familiar it was to those of us who have taken hundreds of funerals down the years. The pomp and the pageantry surrounding it were, of course, quite unlike anything I have ever encountered in my own parochial ministry but, at its heart, we were witnessing the funeral of someone who had died, and whose death had left a massive hole in the lives of many others, most particularly her close family.

I'm still not sure whether or not it was partly in my imagination but I think I also detected a shift in language as the day of the funeral approached. Gone were the euphemisms so greatly loved by a society that tends to shrink away

from the reality of death and they were replaced by a willingness to acknowledge that she had died. And with that, both in the language she had chosen for her service and in places like Archbishop Justin's sermon in Westminster Abbey, came a glorious proclamation of the good news of resurrection. Even in everything that surrounded her death she proclaimed her faith as strongly as ever.

And, I think, by doing so, she enabled hundreds of thousands of people to express their grief, not just for her, but for others who had died. Time and again, as people waiting in the queue along the Embankment or along the Mall were asked about what had brought them there, they talked both about the death of the Queen, but also the deaths of friends or members of their family. It seems that there is a perfectly understandable pent-up desire to grieve, but an invisible societal barrier preventing that from happening.

Time alone will tell whether something may shift in the coming years that allows that barrier to be brought down but I was immensely proud of the clergy's response to her death, along with that of many laity, who were working hard through the provision of silence, books of condolence, services and the like to enable people to express their grief, in all its complexity. I remember something similar happening at the time of Princess Diana's death but, sadly, I didn't see much changing as a result. Instead, as most of you will have experienced, the emphasis at funeral services has increasingly come to be a focus on a celebration of the dead person's life - which must have its place - but not to the exclusion of the grief that death brings.

So, back to that service, and the magnificent role played by so many priests up and down the country, including our retired clergy. If ever there was an argument for the continuing pastoral role of the Established Church, it shone brightly in those days and it was, I believe, something of which we can all be proud - and something which Her Majesty would have greatly valued in all its aspects.

+ Colin



### **From the Editor: pondering the essence of worship**

In this newsletter several people have outlined their thoughts, sometimes very negative, on the future of the church and their role (or otherwise) as it changes, so in my usual quest to fire off something that might inspire your fingers to twitch towards a keyboard I'll share some of my own thoughts on worship!

I have a love affair with my local river. The sheer beauty, joy and peace I find on it is something I like to share at every opportunity. Over many years I have offered, as part of my ministry, to facilitate quiet days on the river for clergy teams. In 2022 I have used 'Emerald', an open electric launch that was unexpectedly gifted to me a year ago and her silence furnishes an almost perfect platform from which the glory of God's creation can be observed as the seasons roll by. For me, a day on the river is a day of rejoicing.

However, a recent day with a group, all much younger than I, cast a subtle new light on all this. Their day focused on an agenda discussing their church vision statement with some intensity. The boat and river simply provided an unusual setting and having got aboard someone said 'we need to start with worship' before a guitar was unpacked, word sheets handed out and songs were sung.

Near the end of a song, though, I suddenly spotted a kingfisher dead ahead, scudding along the surface of the water and I couldn't stop myself calling out. However, only I saw the flash of brilliant blue as the tiny bird disappeared into an overhanging tree and I felt slightly embarrassed about breaking the sense of worship for my companions.

It struck me that while out on the water, I see the creative hand of a loving God who has poured out his artistry for us to enjoy. Yes, I can sing, but it's not so much my voice as my soul that wants to sing its own silent 'soul song' as I see the seasons, the light, the flora and fauna constantly changing, drawing all my senses into the embrace of God's love and provision. For me, that's a form of worship.

However, over the last 50 years, in certain traditions of the church, worship has come to be understood for many predominantly in terms of singing, maybe interspersed with short prayers and maybe Scripture verses too. Whilst God's people have always sung and taken great joy in it, a rounded sense of worship as having form and structure – liturgy – with words spoken as a body and periods of listening silence has, for many in the generations following ours, fallen into abeyance. It seems that a world so full of background noise, has enabled noise itself to grow into its own kind of comfort zone in which silence and reflection can seem scary.

As I grow older I long for peace and would even say I crave the silence and the beauty that, uniquely, the river offers to a personality like mine. As we pass the height of what is perceived to be our 'career usefulness' our Myers-Briggs personality profiles may be very different from that with which we began our ministries. That profile inevitably evolves as the years, the shocks, the delights, the struggles and the joys accumulate.

I think my acquired desire for the peace of reflective, silent worship, the worship of a mind in repose, may not be unique at all, but it highlights why the older generations of worshipping believers often feel in tension with those who are younger. This, I'm picking up, often presents a challenge for some retired clergy – and for me too.

I have been reminded that the heart of worship is an earnest seeking to draw near to God. That is true for all traditions, and the mainstream Catholic and Orthodox understandings of the pathway to achieve that is through forms of liturgy, so, as monastic brother commented recently, 'we don't go running off naked through the woods in our search for him!'

Quite so! But nearly ten years of retirement, to date, has highlighted that not only music, but liturgical words and structures can never remain preserved in formaldehyde while society itself is so rapidly modifying the way people think, perceive, behave and even seek after God.

I've needed grace to handle that sometimes: but I reflect that if the Spirit of God is to be allowed to thrive in our very mixed church communities, we 'old 'uns' can offer what we can, but we cannot force others to see things as we might – and, sadly, it may just be that some of us remain 'on the shelf' for many with whom we'd love to share. In which case, we love from a distance; we observe and we pray, because we've probably done what we were called to do.

As I close this little '*see if we can get some correspondence going*' editorial essay, I will take the opportunity to advise that personal circumstances mean that I will need by March next year to pass this newsletter on to somebody else's nimble editorial fingers. A newsletter like this should, if it's to thrive, be passed around the membership so that it gains new insights and approaches and if you would like to take it aboard, please do let us know.

**Mark Rudall (markrudall@gmail.com)**



## Anna Chaplaincy - A Retirement Ministry?

*Colin Fletcher*

*Offering spiritual care in later life*

In his first Presidential Address to the Portsmouth Diocesan Synod, Bishop Jonathan Frost recently said this: 'The vision I want to offer is a diocese where everyone belongs, (both) older and younger.'

After highlighting the needs of young people and young adults, he went on to say, 'Anna Chaplaincy is a beautiful, growing movement to develop the spirituality of older people. It is based on the ministry of Anna, who saw the infant Jesus in the Temple and praised God for the Messiah. It helps to show the value of the older generation, and gives lay pastors authority to visit people in their own homes and minister to them'.

Those who read this newsletter regularly may well remember the article by Julia Burton-Jones (a member of Anna Chaplaincy's four strong central team) written two years ago in which she outlined how some Anna Chaplains in the Rochester Diocese had developed a particular expertise in ministering to, and with, those with dementia. But Anna Chaplaincy is by no means confined to that group of people. Nor, come to that, is it exclusively a lay vocation as an increasing number of clergy and ministers are becoming Anna Chaplains - many of whom are 'retired'.

My own involvement has come about as the Chair of BRF's trustees with its ministries like Parenting for Faith, Living Faith, Messy Church and, of course, Anna Chaplaincy - all of which we have the privilege of supporting and to some extent funding. Like BRF itself, Anna Chaplaincy began life as a small acorn, and today it has already grown into a strong sapling, if not yet a mighty oak.

In 2010 Debbie Thrower, a Lay Reader in Alton, Hampshire, and better known, perhaps, as a TV presenter, became the first Anna Chaplain, a name she invented herself. Like others, she had spotted the need of older people, and those who surrounded them, and whether or not they had a specific Christian Faith, to receive spiritual and emotional support at this time in their lives. The name 'Anna' means 'Grace', and Anna Chaplaincy is, at its heart, a gracious offering from the local church to its community.

Debbie was appointed to do just that in Alton but her vision grew to be far larger than that. She longed to see 'an Anna Chaplain in every small - and medium-sized - community in the country, and for the Anna Chaplain name to become synonymous with spiritual care for older people'.

Helping to realise that vision was where BRF Ministries became involved, with its strong track record of nurturing initiatives over the past hundred years, initially with its Bible reading notes and its publishing arm (today the Ministry of Living Faith) and, more recently with Parenting for Faith and Messy Church.

Today, as I say, we are seeing a very encouraging growth in the number of Anna Chaplains (currently 236) and the movement is spreading rapidly both across this country and beyond. It benefits from a high degree of subsidiarity grounded in a number of key principles. Whilst there is a small central team providing training and support, all Anna Chaplains have to be accredited, authorised, and accountable to their local church or group of churches. They need to be commissioned after appropriate training (including safeguarding) and to have an enhanced DBS check as, after all, they can find themselves ministering to some quite vulnerable people.

They need to have a heart for a pastoral ministry, to be good listeners, and to have a passion to share God's love with people who can often feel that society is passing them by. Very often too they will be called upon to lead appropriate liturgies of one kind and another. All of which seems to me to describe exactly what drew many of us to offer for ordained ministry in the first place.

Hence my question as the title of this article, 'Anna Chaplaincy - A Retirement Ministry?' And my prayer that many more retired clergy will feel led to join in. To find out more about Anna Chaplaincy go to its website on [www.annachaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk) or email [annachaplaincy@brf.org.uk](mailto:annachaplaincy@brf.org.uk)

### **Church growth and the countryside *Clive Harper***

It is a well-known aphorism that the heart of the Church of England is in the countryside. For hundreds of years the Church has been the common presence in the small towns and villages of the land; and for good reason. Despite the dash for growth seen in Church and State at this present time, things are seen to grow slowly in the countryside: they will not be hurried; it is of the nature of things that it takes time to grow and mature.

Jesus, in his parables often referred to natural growth in illustrating His teaching. And the people of the countryside who live close to nature know about these things. They know that only by giving crops time to grow and providing the right conditions can they hope to have a good harvest. And as it is in the land so it needs to be in the Church. And the people of the countryside need themselves to be nurtured and cared for if they too are to grow.

It is perhaps another aphorism that the Church itself seems to be neglecting the people of the countryside who so need that spiritual presence. The resources of the Church are being directed away from its heartlands and into extravagant plans which might or might not work. In the meantime, the countryside is being side-lined, and historic resources which rightly belong to the parishes are being swallowed up by the extravagances of the Dioceses.

The countryside needs shepherds. With mechanisation many labourers have left the land and gone to the cities; some might argue that this is just cause and effect but there are still families left and they need the presence of the clergy to be shepherds to the people.

Years ago, while working in rural Churches, a farmer said to me 'the shepherd needs to be about his flock'. Just so: by keeping in touch with the people working on the land the church can be seen to be the place to go for births, Marriages and deaths (hatches, matches and dispatches), and much more. It is hard and often lonely work ploughing and sowing, reaping and mowing and the Church needs to be there to provide support and comfort in times of need.

How will the babies be baptised when there is no church? Where will the young people go to be married? Where will the people bury their dead? Oh, I know that the Church is much more than these things but, without a presence, where will the people in the countryside hear the Gospel and the everlasting Word?

Recently, I went back to the church where I served in the 1980s. It was one of seven under my care then in a flourishing group of parishes which did many things together. It was not easy but it was well worthwhile. I was returning forty years later to inter some ashes of a loved one and was pleasantly surprised to find that the churchyard had been expanded and a car park added all by the efforts and at the expense of the local populace. The Incumbent told me that the Church is thriving and yet, she is fearful of the future, voicing her doubts about whether, when she retires, the Diocese will replace her. I wonder if it will: we shall see.

## Praying for peace in the Ukraine

*Arthur Champion*

**Villains and victims** Retired priests should (in theory!) have more time than before to engage with what's happening in the wider world. Boris Johnson declared the Covid pandemic over on 21<sup>st</sup> February, and just three days later Russia invaded Ukraine. This map from Wikipedia shows Ukraine with the annexed Crimea at the bottom and two self-proclaimed separatist republics in Donbas to the right.



According to our mainstream media, the conflict can be blamed entirely on President Putin, a former KGB officer, who has been accused of wanting to reinstate the Soviet Union. By contrast, President Zelensky, a former comedy actor, is portrayed as being entirely innocent. However, on 14th June, the Daily Telegraph carried this headline: *'Pope Francis: NATO may have provoked Russian invasion (but I'm not pro-Putin). The pontiff insists there are 'no good guys and bad guys in the conflict'*. I agree 100% and would like to explain why...



**Fake news** Most people I meet acknowledge that there's always a build-up of tensions before the outbreak of any hostilities and that as the old saying goes: 'truth is the first casualty in war'. It strikes me that too often our congregations settle for a nice simple story they can passively receive through the media; as illustrated by the cartoon (left - published by English is Fun on 18th July 2020).

The mainstream media spent four years fearmongering about Brexit; followed by two years of propaganda about COVID-19 and the past nine months banging on about the war in Ukraine whilst conveniently ignoring dozens of violent conflicts elsewhere in the world. From 2014 onwards our mainstream media largely ignored the civil war in the Donbas which prior to the Russian invasion had claimed over 14,000 lives as well as displacing two million people according to the Crisis Group (<https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/conflict-ukraines-donbas-visual-explainer>).

**What Jesus said about our enemies** Every vicar can find Bible passages which support their own stance on peace-making from pacifism through to going nuclear. An editorial in the Church Times puts it like this: 'In reality, every Christian must exercise degrees of tolerance and intolerance on a large range of topics, based only in part on theological understanding and mostly on upbringing, politics, character and cultural influences.' (Editorial, Church Times 29th July 2022)

So what are we to make of Jesus's instruction - or rather commandment: '...But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven' (Matthew 5: 43) . These words of Jesus Christ have inspired peacemakers all down the centuries although the Church as a whole has often ignored or limited them to personal relationships. Surely this call of Jesus to love, pray and do good to our enemies is very relevant in the current power struggles over Ukraine.

**Watch, listen and pray** If we are to love our human enemies, then we first need to know them and try to see the world from their point of view. We can get to know them by listening, which is in itself a rare and precious way of loving someone. Russia, Ukraine and many NATO members all claim to be Christian nations, at least nominally, but is there anything more horrible than Christians of one nation killing Christians of another nation? When we pray for Russia, we are praying for our Christian brothers and sisters.

**Russia feels threatened by NATO expansion:** President Putin has repeatedly reminded the West that in the early 1990s, Russia agreed to the reunification of Germany on the understanding that NATO would allow the former Warsaw Pact nations to remain neutral. However, NATO has broken this promise in three successive waves of expansion and Ukraine is all that's left of the buffer zone between East and West.

**Ukraine suffers from political corruption:** Ukraine has vast resources which East and West would like to exploit. The USA has sought to influence Ukrainian elections for the advantage of multinational corporations, for example, Victoria Nuland who served in the US State Department under both George Bush and Barack Obama, has admitted that she had spent \$5 billion (not her own money, of course) on engineering the political coup in the Ukraine in 2013/14 (source: <https://godskingdom.org/blog/2018/08/victoria-nulands-role-in-influencing-elections>).

**Prayerful action:** Prayer takes us into the territory of Ephesians (6:12) and the Lord's Prayer gives us a fresh perspective beyond national allegiances as we daily ask for: 'Thy Kingdom to come and Thy will to be done on earth as in heaven'.

**Financial support:** As well as praying, we can financially support Christian charities working at ground level such as the Slavic Gospel Association (<https://www.sga.org.uk>) which was founded in 1934 and serves about 2,300 Russian and Ukrainian speaking communities. Jesus has told us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43 & Luke 6:27) so the very least we can do is to try to see the Ukrainian conflict also from President Putin's point of view and to pray for God's influence over his life.

**Further reading and listening:** 'Ukraine on Fire' by Global Tree Pictures in November 2021 available on YouTube  
<https://youtu.be/pKcmNGvaDUs>

'The Orthodox Church is standing in the way of the New World Order' <https://russian-faith.com/orthodox-church-standing-way-new-world-order-n3982>

#### **A personal prayer resource offered by Arthur:**

Dear Lord and Father, In your mercy and for your glory, look with favour on the Earth which you have created over countless millions of years which is now at risk of nuclear catastrophe. By your creative genius this planet is unique and teeming with diverse species of life.

Unlike any other animal, you have granted humanity to be made in your own image with potential for great good as well as great evil. We have selfishly exploited one another and neglected to properly care for your creation. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength but instead have loved ourselves and the work of our hands. We confess to having trusted too much in science and not enough in Your Holy Spirit who inspires the Scriptures. And now as East and West are fighting over Ukraine we face the prospect of warfare escalating into a nightmare of nuclear annihilation.

Save us dear Lord, for we cannot save ourselves! Save us Lord, for political, military and even church leaders are trapped in godless ideology. Save us Lord, for we have all sinned and now come to you in humble repentance. For the sake of your own creation, please send your Holy Spirit to work in the consciences of national leaders.

For the sake of your Church which is set apart as the Bride of Christ, please watch over all those who name Jesus as Lord.

For the sake of your own intention that everyone should have the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ, please move

nations to pursue your ways of justice and peace. We humbly make these requests through faith that Jesus your Son is seated at the right hand of the Father where he constantly intercedes for our well-being. Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

## **Mission and the Church in changing times**

**Barry Rogerson**

We don't have an attic, but we do have a hall cupboard in the flat we inhabit. In that cupboard is an old shoebox with papers from my past. In it there is the hymn sheet for my ordination in Durham Cathedral sixty years ago last Trinity Sunday: yes, it was Trinity Sunday in those days.

Looking back it was relatively easy to work out a parochial strategy. There were funerals, weddings and baptisms galore, there were opportunities for home visits which took up most afternoons and work with young people was given you on a plate: youth clubs, uniformed organisations, Sunday schools and confirmation classes.

I look now at the local clergy and realise just how things have changed. For most congregations the number of Occasional Offices are minuscule. There very few confirmation candidates since 'Communion Before Confirmation' became the norm. Work with young people is very patchy and home visiting is now difficult to organise, given the number of people in work and the reluctance to invite 'cold callers' into homes. Today's Parochial Clergy have a hard furrow to plough so is there an alternative parochial strategy for our time?

A World Mission Conference was held in Melbourne in 1980, entitled, 'Thy Kingdom Come.' In its Report the local congregation is described as an advertisement for God's Kingdom and, in particular, it highlighted how the Eucharist embodies many of the practical aspects of that Kingdom. There is the Greeting which welcomes everyone irrespective of ethnicity, gender or social standing. There is the Peace which embodies forgiveness and reconciliation and caring between members of the congregation. There is the Fraction, where we share with others and finally we are sent out in the name of Christ to work for God's Kingdom.

Three years later the writings and prayers of Bishop Stephen Bayne, once Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion, were published in his memory. Bishop Stephen wrote, 'The Mission is God's, not ours....we are privileged to go where He is and for a minute to stand by his side'. The role of Christians is to recognise God at work in the world at large and to join with God and others, most of whom are not Christian and contribute towards the coming of the Kingdom.

It is perhaps the task of the local clergy to encourage their congregations to recognise the sparks of the coming of the Kingdom and to work with others for its fruition. One of the ways in which we begin to widen our horizons is through the Intercessions, in which we can give thanks and pray for those involved in many aspects of our lives, the environment, caring for neighbours, the peacemakers and those working for a more inclusive community.

Sometimes we can see there is a need in the local community which is not being met and as a congregation we can organise ourselves to try and meet it. A local example started out as a way of meeting a need for those who were grieving. At first the focus was on those grieving for someone who had died, but it became clear that grief can be much wider than that: divorce, the empty nest syndrome, retirement and redundancy.

Each parish is different, but as the recent pandemic showed us there are always those who need help and those who need to be encouraged to care for others. A Church that concentrates on the Coming of the Kingdom is more likely to appeal to the idealism and concerns of the young and maybe that is a way in which we can encourage young people to take Christianity seriously, not just as a private hobby, but as a life changing opportunity.

In working out a relevant Parochial strategy for today we only have to ask, 'What is the Church for?' And the answer lies in preparing and equipping the people of God to participate in the Mission of God, in the coming of the Kingdom.

## **A possible funeral resource**

**David Head**

Members who take funerals from time to time will be aware that useful funeral hymnody and laments are in short supply. The tune 'Danny Boy' (Londonderry Air) has been used countless times for hymnody and member David Head has offered the following, set to it, and therefore immediately usable with a congregation that has never seen it before.

David wrote it specifically for the funeral of his mother. He says: '*(some)... readers may disapprove of the universalist implications within, but so many people at my mother's funeral asked if they could use it (and at the time*

*I temporised, with it hot off the keyboard) that I think it might strike a chord with some people, and be useful certainly in some church funerals.'*

### **There is no love that cannot last forever**

Within the heart of God who made us all.  
There is no life that is forever over,  
No final death that holds us in its thrall.  
There are no tears that cannot tell a story,  
There is no truth that cannot be believed.  
We will give thanks for lives that show God's glory  
In every word of love that's spoken and received.

The only choice is love with all our being,  
The only way is doing what is good;  
There are no hearts that will be hurt for seeing  
That we are welcomed, loved and understood.  
Although we grieve for ones we love we're losing,  
In us, and them, and God, the love lives on.  
We are beloved, of our Creator's choosing,  
And in His love there's nothing lost and nothing gone.     [David Head 2019]

### **Time for writing... Geoff Smith**

I have a novel coming out in October. The novel is a fictionalised 'biography'. Well, they do say that everyone has a novel in them and I guess that I am no exception, although the critical reader will be the best judge of that. The main character is an ordinand, David, and we meet him at his ordination where he is made Deacon. During the ordination service he reflects on all that had brought him to this point in his life and then the story takes us forward into his new life as a curate in the Church of England. Friends who have read the story have been complimentary and my publisher has clearly felt that the novel is worth taking a risk on.

There are some risky elements to the story, most of which is true but some of it I have (as someone once complained about novels 'they read as though someone is making it up as they go along') made up as I went along! So the affair, the attempted rape and the girlfriend who goes off to seek ordination in the USA are in that category. If you ever get to read it you will make your own mind up. Running through the story is a recurring theme of the inevitable and possibly irreversible decline of the Church we all love.

I was made Deacon in 1969 at the age of 24 and priested a year later - more by chance than design as I was told by the Archdeacon who had found an unopened letter of complaint about me on the Bishop's desk. Apparently, prayers I had led at a main service had met with such strong objections from the commanding officer of the local military airfield that he wrote to protest my forthcoming ordination. My view that the excursion into Cambodia by Richard Nixon was neither winnable nor made strategic sense was treasonable at the very least. I thought it was a simple prayer for peace and an end to conflict. I had thought the Air Vice Marshal or Commodore or Group Captain had made his point very well already when he slammed the 14th Century door of the Church as he left dragging his wife with him even without the letter trying to destroy my career before it started.

Many years later when I was a Diocesan Officer, Social Responsibility Adviser in a Northern Diocese there was sarcasm when during a Synod someone referred to me and my 'Board for Socialist Irresponsibility'. The novel steers a path between my sense that my vocation and my Priesthood have been a both a blessing and a privilege, a duty and a joy, as well as a challenge that has at times caused me to think very seriously about finding the exit ASAP.

I have been a Civil Servant twice, my first job being as a Clerical Assistant, my second as a Grade 7 leading a small team in the West Midlands as part of the Home Office. I then left again to lead an international charity for the last seven years before retirement. I have also held two House for Duty Posts. One very successfully one less so.

The key to the success in my first House for Duty post was that I wasn't 'the Vicar'; the key to failing in the second post was that I *was* the vicar. I realised that in the 12 years that elapsed between the first and the second job was that the Church had changed. It was no longer good enough to be out and about in the parish, as Giles Fraser once commented (although I probably misquote him) 'visiting the sick, the lonely and the bereaved'. Rather I had to sit in front of a computer filling in a wide variety of forms whose relevance was questionable and then as Covid struck, sit in front of a computer leading worship.

As my stress levels rose and as I began to realise that I had made a huge mistake by taking on a job in my mid-seventies I was advised by a friend, himself going through a stressful safeguarding challenge, that I should join the Faith Workers Branch of Unite, which I'm delighted to say, I did. The advice and support received from the Union has been quite tremendous as I wrote in a blog recently quoting The Strawbs' song from 1973: '*Oh, you don't get me, I'm part of the union / Until the day I die, until the day I die... / Before the union did appear / My life was half as clear / Now I've got the power to the working hour / And every other day of the year...*

Apart from the support I received at meetings I was required to attend I was given two pieces of advice from the Help Line: No meeting with a Bishop is or ever can be informal, it is part of a process, and so it is essential that a record is kept and the meeting doesn't happen without you having a representative present. The second piece of advice was even more crucial and represents a warning that we should all heed: the hierarchy doesn't want conflict so, even if they know that the situation into which you are being placed is potentially conflictual they will put you in and then of course when things get difficult you're on your own.

This is why my novel is entitled 'Holy Disorder'. It seems to me that, after 53 years since my being made Deacon, the Church is failing its clergy. The poverty of pastoral support that I have experienced from senior staff is frankly shocking, the only exception to that, apart from my Area Dean, is the Diocesan Secretary. But the church is also failing its membership. Some years ago a friend of mine was inducted into a very rural parish in Northumberland where there were more sheep than parishioners. The Bishop preached a whimsical sermon about sheep and shepherds possibly failing to recognise that sheep are bred for meat, for which they have to be slaughtered and wool for which they have to be fleeced.

That's a pretty fair description of what the Diocese now expects from the average congregation. I think that after 53 years I am concluding that the Church (generally) but the Church of England particularly has pitched its much narrower tent on wonky premises. It now demands Management rather than Mission - but sadly the present Bench of Bishops and Synod is simply not very good at management so we slide from order to disorder very much like today's Tory Party. It promotes Productivity over pastoral care: We hear so much from the top about growth, church planting, recruitment of the young and growing vocations. What we fail to do is what the young curate who encouraged my vocation both by his example and his words described to me when I asked him what his job entailed. His response has stayed with me ever since: 'Love them into believing'...

And we have moved from order based on New Testament principles of loving to disorder based on some out-of-touch management text. We have also moved from worship to wishful thinking. I think that the biggest tragedy is our losing touch with the poetic glory of Cranmer's liturgical language. A Bishop, who visited our parish to lead morning prayer was criticised because he didn't 'pray from the heart' but instead handed out copies of Cranmer's 'Morning Prayer' with readings and psalms for the day. He spoke about what moved him about being able to say his prayers with those gathered there but they didn't recognise the truth of his words, in their wishful thinking they saw extemporary prayer as true worship. They preferred the disorder of laying requests before God to the order of Cranmer's Liturgy.

So I finish with a passage from the opening Chapter of 'Holy Disorder': The Ordination.

*'His knees hurt. Try as he might he could not raise his thoughts above this pain, this intrusion into what he was promised would be, and which was meant to be, the most profound spiritual experience of his life.*

*His knees hurt. He tried to move his body, a discreet exercise regime intended to relieve the pressure on his knees. He remembered an old school friend who, on hearing of his plans for Ordination, had pulled his leg about wearing out the knees of his jeans, but today it felt as though it was his knees that would not survive. If only he could stand and stretch, but the Bishop was edging closer.*

*His knees hurt. He tried raising his feet, one ankle at a time, but that only made the pain that much more unbearable, and he knew that fidgeting would just draw the attention of the Bishop's Chaplain who had been watching him closely since yesterday's row with the Cathedral verger.*

*As the Bishop came closer he tried to turn the grimace he knew was clearly written on his face, into the semblance of someone in the embrace of a spiritual experience. But it was hard: what was he doing here? How had all this happened?*

*The strange turn of events that had brought him from the back-to-backs of his home town, the boring, routine work in the garage, the early mornings and later nights, the fighting, the drinking, the laddishness that had been his past and was meant to be his future – to this?*

*The soaring arches of the Cathedral, the clerestory lights high in the vaulting of the ceiling. This was poetry in stone, conceived and constructed by masons who had a story to tell, and for whom this was their worship. Even as they built, they knew that they would not be welcome amongst the Sunday-best worshipping congregation and the 'Barchester' clergy that would run the place...'.*

## **Home Start: A charity worth working with...**

***John Druce***

When I retired over 20 years ago, having got used to being retired - which does take time - I found myself enjoying it very much. I was able to play music several times a week, work on my allotment, and take my wife out to the cinema and theatre, as well as go to the opera. In fact, I thought I was enjoying myself so much that I felt guilty and thought I ought to be doing something for other people.

And then one day, I went into our local library and found a leaflet about Home Start. I read it and thought: I could do that, and so I volunteered. I was interviewed and it was explained to me that it mostly concerned women but there was a place for men and I was accepted to go on the training course. This did little more than underline everything I had been practising as a visitor in my pastoral work. And, of course, there was Safeguarding as well!

Home Start normally asks volunteers to visit their families once a week for two hours. When I started, support was limited to families with children under school age. Now it includes families with children at school. The aim is to support families in need and the vast majority will have been recommended by Social Services.

The support needed can cover a very widespread set of problems, but all will be feeling it difficult to cope and probably lonely. In spite of what was said to me when I offered, all the people I have supported have been, with one exception, men. It wouldn't be right to describe them but all were different. The two I enjoyed most were my first and my last. I got so close to the last, that (and I was in my 80's by then so it was time to think about retiring) that I did retire and continued to stay in touch. Once a month or so our local group had meetings. This enabled people to talk about their families and often to hear an interesting talk. In my local group I was the only man: I used to call myself the 'token' man! But there is more need for men than is generally appreciated.

I am writing this article to encourage newly retired clergy (male and female) to consider volunteering for this charity. If the pastoral side of your work has been something you have always enjoyed and you like visiting, then you will enjoy this. Of course, you don't go to 'convert', but two of my families have had church membership. It is not always easy. Some people can be very hard to converse with but you are providing a degree of contact which they will need and would not otherwise obtain. And there is a shortage of volunteers.

## **Pension Increases 2023**

With increasing costs of living affecting us all, we asked the Church of England Pensions Board when pensioners will hear about the increases to their clergy pension for April 2023 and to explain how increases are calculated. They kindly replied as follows:

Annual pension increases are calculated during the autumn each year. We are aiming to write to all those in receipt of a clergy pension by Christmas, or early in the new year, giving details of the increases that will apply from April 2023.

The Pensions Board administers the pension schemes in accordance with the various Scheme Rules. The schemes and the Rules have changed over time which adds a little complexity. The clergy schemes contain guaranteed increases, as follows:

- For pensions accrued/earned before 1 January 1998 under the old (Commissioners) clergy pension scheme, the guaranteed increase is RPI capped to 5.0%
- For pensions accrued/earned in the new pension scheme (the 'Funded' scheme) on or after 1 January 1998 and before 1 January 2008, the guaranteed increase is also RPI capped to 5.0%.
- For pensions accrued/earned on or after 1 January 2008, the guaranteed increase is RPI capped to 3.5%.

If someone had been in stipendiary ministry either side of 1 January 2008, part of the pension would be guaranteed to be uprated by RPI or 5.0% and part guaranteed to be uprated by RPI or 3.5%.

As with state pension increases, the September Retail Price Index (RPI) measure of inflation is used as the reference point.

The Funded pension scheme Rules, for service from 1 January 1998, also provide the Trustee with an additional power to review pensions in payment from time to time, and it may (but is not bound to) grant additional increases to all or any pensions, at its discretion.

If, as many expect, the September RPI is materially higher than 5%, the Board as Trustee of the Funded Scheme would likely want to exercise its power to review. Whether such a review resulted in a further discretionary increase on top of the already guaranteed increase would be subject to careful consideration and professional advice. Many factors will need to be examined including the financial impact on the various pension Funds, the support available from government and other parts of the Church of England, the economic outlook and how to ensure different groups are treated fairly. Such a review would be undertaken with care and appropriate pace so that members are informed well in advance of April.

Separately, the September inflation figures are also used as the reference point for increases in the State Pension. At the time of writing the Government appears to be committed to the 'triple lock' which would see state pensions rise by inflation next April.

### **Funding and financing of CHARM Rental Retirement Housing: an explainer**

*This is a guest article by the Pensions Board summarising a presentation they shared at the recent RCACoE catch up meeting. We thought this would be of wider interest.*

The Pensions Board operates the CHARM scheme (the Church's Housing Assistance for Retired Ministers) on behalf of the wider Church. This offers retiring clergy and their households the opportunity to rent a retirement home from a portfolio across England & Wales. The Board currently has:



The rent formula is similar to that used by a Housing Association, and results in a significant discount to market rents as compared to equivalent property in the same area.

Unlike a housing association, the Board does not receive any government funding. (The Board is technically classed as a private landlord.) However, the national Church makes an annual grant to support the costs of CHARM – this is voted on at the July General Synod each year (and for historic reasons is known as "Vote 5"). This grant is important because the income from rent is not sufficient to cover the full cost of running the service, as explained below.

The number of properties that the Pensions Board owns outright is fairly low. Most properties have been secured through borrowing – a bit like a giant mortgage across many properties. Like a mortgage, interest has to be paid on the borrowing and the capital has to be repaid in the future. The Church Commissioners initially acted as the lender until withdrawing from providing new finance in 2010. There are still around 250 properties financed by the Church

Commissioners. Since 2010 the Board has taken on around £130 million of commercial borrowing (bank debt and long term bonds) to finance the purchase of properties.

As illustrated in the chart [below], around 75% of income from rents is spent on paying the interest costs on borrowing. The remainder is not sufficient to cover repairs and maintenance or other costs, and this is where the “Vote 5” grant from the wider Church comes in. CHARM also benefits from a share of the income from the Pensions Board’s charitable investments which help with the costs of housing and other services. Even so, there is usually a gap each year which is generally made up through gains on property sales (where the sale price is more than the share of borrowing) plus donations and legacies, for which the trustees are grateful. Nevertheless, gains on sales and legacies etc, are by their nature, uncertain, and looking ahead it will become ever more difficult to balance the books.

Borrowing to fund purchases certainly imposes a cost. Commercial borrowing comes with strict ‘covenants’ – for example, minimum ratios for income and expenditure. These covenants can be limiting, for example on the number of major projects that can happen each year. These covenants also enforce a level of financial discipline, which is necessary and not unhelpful. In an environment of rising inflation and rising interest rates, such financial discipline is even more important.

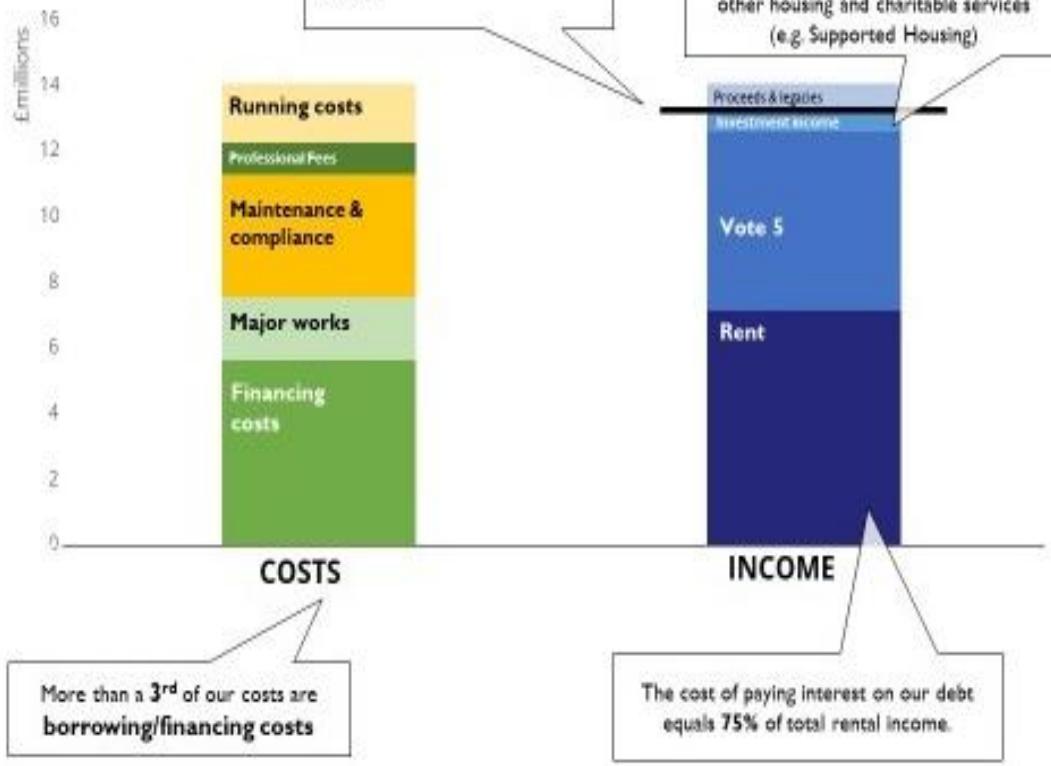
With around 1 in 6 retiring clergy approaching the Board for help with retirement housing, borrowing has enabled the retirement portfolio to grow considerably to meet rising demand, which would otherwise not have been possible. CHARM rental now provides 1,200 properties with a presence in every diocese, helping clergy to continue to exercise their vocation in retirement with long term security of tenure.

For more information about the Pensions Board’s retirement housing services, please see:

[www.churchofengland.org/housing](http://www.churchofengland.org/housing). At the suggestion of the Pension Board’s Resident Panel, the information in this article is being turned into fact sheet which will be available on the website in the near future.

## Costs and income for CHARM rental

Illustrative chart based on 2021



### The secretary writes

Earlier in the year we asked members for questions for us to raise with the NCIs at our October meeting. There was a good response for this so we grouped the questions under a number of headings which appear below, together with the responses in italics.

**GDPR** At our March meeting we asked about the GDPR issues around informing Retirement officers of the movements of retired clergy and spouses into and out of their dioceses by the Pensions Board. The RCACoE avoids this problem by having on the application form a tick box for the applicant to complete consenting to contact information being shared with RCOs. Why cannot the Pensions Board adopt a similar practice in its correspondence with retirees? *The Pensions Board is working on this issue and hopes to hold a meeting of RCOs in March 2023 with further information.*

**Fees for Sunday duty** Whilst there is little variation between dioceses in the level of stipends there are significant differences in the level of fees for Sunday duty between them, varying between £27-75 as far as we are aware. At the lowest level this represents far less than the living wage for some 6-7 hours of work in preparation time, travel and participation in the act of worship. Could the House of Bishops be persuaded to introduce a national scale? *The Ministry reps. Said this was a matter for dioceses rather than the national church and they were unable to lay down a national instruction to dioceses. Maybe members should lobby their Diocesan Synod representatives and DBFs. We are a "diocesan" church.*

**Housing** Given the General Synod commitment to net zero carbon what is the Pensions Board plan for insulation, solar panels, heat pumps, or other appropriate energy efficiency measures in its properties and when can we look forward to its implementation? This would greatly enhance the well-being of tenants in terms of both comfort and expense. *This is a complex matter and can depend on the unique situation of each property, there is a plan to move towards net zero but sources of full funding for this have not yet been identified. So far £30m has been identified which will be utilised over the next 3 years, the policy is to buy properties which are as energy-efficient as possible.*

*Care needs to be exercised in installation of heat pumps, this has to be done alongside other energy-efficient measures.*

How will the increase in CHARM rents be calculated in 2023 given the increased level of inflation? Will it be the usual solution of matching the increase across social housing? *The figure for September inflation was not yet available but tenants would be informed in good time of changes in rents for 2023.*

When rent assessment moved from 30% of income to the current system of target rent there was a safeguard for existing tenants in circumstances such as bereavement or unforeseen crises in which the rent might return to the 30% limit, will this apply if rent and energy costs together exceed 30% of income? *Possible rents for 2023 are being examined carefully.*

Some tenants of CHARM property have taken early retirement on health grounds and will receive no energy relief payments from the government because they have not yet reached state pension age. They also have their rent calculated in the same way as those who do receive state pension yet pay the same costs. They might get some state benefits each month but these are means tested against the church pensions and therefore receive reduced payments. How can the Pensions Board support these tenants in their specific situation? *Members in situations similar to this need to be in touch with the Pensions Board Welfare Officer who may be able to help. There is a problem about continuing contributions from the PB hardship fund, which might be taxed or counted against state benefits. The Clergy Support Trust are offering the possibility of up to 3 emergency grants per annum of a maximum of £500 for each application. Local authorities hold hardship funds which could be applied for.*

Living in supported housing are tenants whose health requires particular dietary regimes, such as those who are diabetic – what provision is being offered for them in shared mealtimes? We understand that some have withdrawn from meals because they are filling, with the use of fats and sugar, rather than nutritious. *Members should approach the scheme manager to discuss their particular needs.*

*House for duty posts are now being considered as part of eligibility for CHARM.*

**Pensions** What steps is the Church ( Church Commissioners, Archbishop's Council, General Synod, House of Bishops) taking to maintain the value of church pensions in the present and in the months to come with an increasing level of inflation above the 3.5%and 5% caps in the current scheme? The value received considerable diminishment in the early part of this century when it was reduced from 2/3 of stipend to 1/2 and then dropped from SP2, does not the covenant for the well-being of the clergy reach into the years of retirement? At present the value of pension has dropped by 5% in the current 10%inflation, will it also drop by the same percentage after next April whilst CHARM rents go up by inflation? We understand that cost of restoring the pension to previous levels would be in the region of £25m. 2.9% of the Church Commissioners growth in 2020. *If the September inflation figure is above 5% there is the possibility for part of the scheme to be reviewed by the PB(as per the article above from the Pensions Board) But the portion of the scheme which is still supported by the Church Commissioners would require action to be decided by General Synod, or the House of Bishops, or Archbishops Council.*

**Church Commissioners and Pensions Board investment policy** In the light of the revelations earlier this month at the hearings established by the U.S.Congress to investigate the major oil companies and the PR firms and tactics they have employed to spread disinformation on climate science and policy will there be any re-examination of the current policy of "engagement" with fossil fuels companies?

**Governance** Could Min Div clarify the statement in Annex 1 of "The Deployment of Clergy with licences and PTO" June 2014 is still in place. "Where a cleric with PTO has been elected to a deanery synod, it is appropriate for them to be co-opted onto the PCC" *This no longer applies, such a cleric could be co-opted to a PCC if the PCC wishes to do that( as with any other person who the PCC might decide to co-opt.*

**Safeguarding** Now that the PTO pathway has been in existence for a significant time we are surprised to discover that it has yet to be implemented in many dioceses. We are continually finding we receive complaints from clergy that they are still *This was not known* being expected by their diocese to undergo the same training as Parish Leaders. What is being done by the NST and the House of Bishops to promote the PTO pathway in the C. of E.? *All of the dioceses know of the existence of the PTO Pathway, some have chosen not to adopt it. Members should make representations to their diocese if it is not being made available.*

What qualifications are DSA's expected to possess on appointment and what subsequent training is offered? *They are expected to be recruited from safeguarding professions with appropriate expertise and qualifications. There is a programmed of professional development undertaken by the NST.*

How many members of safeguarding teams, including core groups are expected to undergo unconscious bias training? *This is part of a package which also includes training in advanced safeguarding, and awareness of spiritual abuse.*

To whom or what is the Independent Safeguarding Board accountable? *This was not known.*

**Travel Costs** the HMRC allowance has been 45p per mile for many years, are approaches being made to Government to enable this allowance to be increased to match the current cost of travel? The Churches Main Committee used to deal with this sort of thing, who would do it now? *The Finance Dept. at Church House has been contacted about this but they do not feel that the government is willing to upgrade the current mileage allowance.*



At our October Council meeting we discussed reports from the regions, one of the comments from Liverpool was the expression of a desire to meet with other RCOs in the NW region; Council felt that this was something we should encourage, perhaps including parts of Yorkshire and the north-east in such a meeting. There has in the past been a regular meeting for some southern RCOs in September and notes from this year's event are appended below for consideration. We would like to support more meetings like this on a regional basis, so if interested RCOs could let me know if they feel such a meeting would be valuable in their region could they please get in touch and we shall see how plans might be progressed.

### **Day for Diocesan Clergy Retirement Officers – NOTES from the Day Sarum College Salisbury – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

The meeting was presided over by Rt Revd Ian Brackley, Chair of the Retired Clergy Association of the Church of England, and administered by Canon John Wood, Diocesan Retirement Officer for Salisbury Diocese, whose notes follow below. Principal speakers were the Venerable Alan Jeans, Archdeacon of Sarum, and Canon Professor James Woodward, Principal of Sarum College.

**SESSION 1 10.45-12.00** Archdeacon Alan Jeans asked for “Chatham House Rules”, which I hope I have respected in omitting some of what he had to say – and would wish to applaud the openness with which he shared his thoughts.

Alan spoke of retired clergy as offering “pivotal, watershed ministries” and of the essential need for honesty in addressing the challenges of ministry. We agonise over pastoral organisation but struggle to adapt to contemporary challenges – “We can only understand the role of the Church if we can understand the culture in which we live.” Our understanding of the history of ministry is “rose-tinted at best, flawed at worst.”

But God is “good, compassionate, gracious and given us all the resources to be the church God wants us to be – prayerful, expecting to be radical and credible. Does ministry “require stipend? Parsonages? Parishes? What capacity is there for re-imagining ministry in any other way?” Trained at STETS, Alan said he had never done the job for which he had trained. There was a cultural ignorance about what clergy are for: “I don’t hear much about working in the community.” Current challenges included finance and the process of moving on from the COVID pandemic – responding by cutting posts was “bonkers”. We need to examine issues of retirement and recruitment; non-stipendiary ministers living in their own property; training and formation – are we training for what clergy will be doing in ten years’ time? - changes in deployment – spouses are often the most significant income generators - family education issues. Are we losing a sense of the freedom of the Spirit? We need to allow gifts to bubble up; we need lay administrators. There was a need for role description in any ministry – associate ministers have this; should provide them for retired clergy also. Why are we advertising posts that cannot be done? We need to equip the whole body of Christ; we need to consult the local community.

Do strategies make any difference? There's rather a need to focus on

- Pastoral care
- Engagement with Community
- Serving people's needs.

Retired clergy need to have distinctive ministries, their particular gifts and experience to be harnessed (Here Alan recounted as specific example of a parish priest's ministry being undermined by retired clergy and a failure of senior clergy to address this effectively).

There was a need to understand Team, to stop being a crutch, for retired clergy to be valued (not excluded); in general retired clergy want to be responsive.

There was a need to be:

- Faithful to my calling
- Pastoral in my compassion
- Sacramental in ministry

Responses to Alan (and his further comments) included

- A noting of the recognition in African culture of "the wisdom of the elders"
- What is retirement for retired clergy? – what does vocation mean in retirement?
- Need for a job description on taking on a ministry
- Where do an ageing society and an ageing workforce come in all this?
- Who's doing the thinking in the C of E?
- Bath & Wells were experimenting with neighbourhood chaplaincies
- Chaplains as a model for being a priest in the community? Alan said he would love to be included in conversations about this and community ministry.

**SESSION 2 12.00-12.45** A second morning session gave opportunity for each participant to report on recovery of church involvement following COVID lockdowns. The following summarizes these: I apologise for any omissions.

There were some people still afraid to use their car.

Many were finding recovery of normal life hard, questioning who still wishes to be active, regarding GDPR rules as daunting.

Some of us were still intending to "reset" our practice in the coming months or in the new year.

There was a significant reduction in regular church attendance

There was concern for the well-being of "unreachables", about single clergy who had retired early, and about vulnerability to the cost of living.

John Good (Exeter) had tried "Zoom" Evensong but this was not well-attended; he had made himself available to speak by phone to those bereaved by COVID. Over 80n people had applied for support from the £16k allocated to a support fund

Derek Chandler (College of St Barnabas) spoke of the role of the college, originally for retired clergy and spouses but now available to Christians of all denominations in England; there was an institutional anxiety reverberating through staff and residents.

Jane Edwards (Rochester) spoke of questions around retired clergy housing schemes

Martha Weatherill (Chichester) said that people were wanting to communicate and regain a sense of community; it was important to have a website and acknowledge the ministry of retired clergy, to emphasise a sense of continuing vocation.

Chris Hare (Bath & Wells) explained that deanery officers led in ministry to retired clergy; retired clergy were involved in "shared local ministry" but there was a drop in those wanting to retain PTO – there were safeguarding issues.

**SESSION 3 13.45-14.50** After lunch, James Woodward welcomed us to Sarum and spoke of the consistent thread in his ministry of practical and pastoral concern for the spiritual welfare of the elderly\*. He had been Master of the Foundation of Lady Katherine Leveson (2000-9) which includes the Leveson Centre for the Study of Ageing, Spirituality and Social Policy. He addressed the question, "Does religion help people to age well?", referring to the work of Peter Coleman in the study of ageing, and considered how ageing in clergy might have commonality with ageing in the wider population. People tend to become more religious as they get older through (1) an increased

awareness of their mortality and (2) increased awareness of things they've made a mess of.... "God bless this mess". What is it about our spiritual/pastoral practice that brings people back to a religion centred in Christ....

A restatement of commitment at 70 could begin to release a spiritual narrative which could be significant in what it means to be church. Does this resonate?

In practical ministry those in leadership need to recognise the moment and be brave enough to say "We think you've done enough."

Building back after COVID difficult for all of us – the challenge of addressing the post-COVID situation theologically.

*\*James' book, "Valuing Age: Pastoral Ministry with Older People" (SPCK 2008), is in the New Library of Pastoral Care*

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We ended with a celebration of the Eucharist for those able to stay, in which the president was Bishop Ian Brackley. Ian retires as Chair of the RCA in October; his successor-designate is Rt Revd Colin Fletcher.

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**What happened to the General Meetings in 2022?** We had insufficient expressions of interest in attending from members to ensure viability, fewer than 10 for each meeting. So we shall have to hold the AGM for 2021 by zoom again, as we did last year. It will be at 10am on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November. All members are invited to join us on zoom, if you wish to attend by zoom would you please let the Secretary, Malcolm Liles, know by 17<sup>th</sup> November so that you can be sent the zoom link and necessary papers.

**Forthcoming vacancy on RCACoE National Council** Richard Orchard who has represented the dioceses of Chichester, Rochester, and Canterbury for a good many years has indicated a wish to retire from Council. I would be grateful, therefore, to receive either nominations or expressions of interest in filling this post from members in those dioceses. In the event of there being a number of nominations or volunteers before the end of December 2022 I shall request brief resumes from those offering or nominated for publication in the next newsletter and an election amongst members in Rochester, Chichester, and Canterbury will take place in January 2023 so that the new member can join council for the next meeting in March. It would be good to have more female, disabled, or ethnic representation on Council.

**Please note that views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and should not be understood as in any way reflecting the position of RCACoE**



Do you have something to say? Maybe a response to something you've read in this newsletter or encountered elsewhere? Perhaps something you think might encourage your retired colleagues? Write it up – in not more than about 800 words ideally - or contact the Editor:

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