

From the Chair: the Rt Revd Colin Fletcher writes:

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As we all know following in the footsteps of a predecessor who did a great job has its downsides as well as its upsides.

On the one hand, coming into post after Bishop Ian handed over the reins in November has brought with it all sorts of benefits. The RCACoE is a well-run charity, that has weathered the storms of COVID, adapting to zoom as it went along, and which, as I have come to learn very rapidly, is highly respected in the various National Church Institutions based at Church House Westminster.

Much of the reason for that is all that Ian has given to the role as Chair, together with the outstanding work of Malcolm Liles, David Pritchard, Mark Rudall and all our Council Members. To them all, as your new Chair, I owe an immense debt of gratitude and particularly to Bishop Ian, along with his predecessor, Bishop David Jennings, who could not have done more to make the transition as easy as possible.

On the other hand, I am very conscious that Bishop Ian has left big boots to fill and my aim is simply to carry on from where we have reached in seeking to fulfil the aims of the Association particularly, as far as my role is concerned, at a National Level. It is a great inheritance and one which needs to be preserved and nurtured.

From my conversations with a number of Council Members over the past six months several themes have emerged which I shall try to keep uppermost in my mind in seeking to serve you. Amongst them are:-

1. Pensions
2. Housing
3. Safeguarding Training
4. The Ministries of the 'Retired' (note the inverted commas)
5. Residential and Care Provision
6. The Clergy Discipline Measure
7. Fees
8. This Newsletter

Let me take each of them in turn, offering some initial thoughts which I know will change as things develop.

1. PENSIONS - Hopefully you will have heard by now that both the Church Commissioners and the Pensions Board have been able to announce a 10.1% increase in pensions from 1 April 2023 in line with the Government's increase for most Old Age Pensions. Of course, this increase can only track

what has already been happening with inflation and, as we all know, costs for such things as energy and food have already gone up very considerably. In addition, people living on their own are often particularly badly affected by such things as heating bills. The Clergy Support Trust has seen an increase in grant requests and I know that they would be the first to encourage people to contact them if pensioners are experiencing particular difficulties.

[Helping Anglican clergy and their families in times of need | Clergy Support Trust](#)

2. HOUSING - I confess that I'm having to learn the complexities of housing provided in one way or another by the Pensions Board, and to learn of the challenges that they face in terms of capital funding, rents, and the costs of repairs and improvements. One thing I have heard time and again is that they want to do things as well as they can and that the more communication that goes on the more likely that is to be achieved. I have been made aware of some sad stories but much is working well, I think, and there is a 'CHARMERS' group having regular conversations with the Board's staff – but it has no current web presence.
[Retirement housing | The Church of England](#)
[Supported Housing | The Church of England](#)
3. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING - This is always going to be complex given the fact that some of us are virtually running parishes, whilst others only take services very occasionally, but I'm glad that many dioceses do seem to have concluded that the 'Leadership' level of training is not needed for everyone.
4. THE MINISTRIES OF THE 'RETIRED' - From my time as Bishop of Dorchester I was left in no doubt that, without the ministry of retired clergy holding PTO, the pressure on the parish system, even with the large numbers of Self-Supporting Priests and Deacons and Licensed Lay Ministers that we had, would have become overwhelming for many Stipendiary Incumbents (and benefices in vacancy), particularly in rural areas. Various reports, including one of our own, have highlighted this but I am sure that there are more coherent ways forward than the huge diversity that is currently operating, whilst recognising that retirement can mean just that and that retired clergy minister as volunteers in response to their vocation. In that context I am looking forward to talking with Bishop Chris Goldsmith, the National Director of Ministry, to find out more about his vision for retirement ministry (not least for those who live near one or more diocesan boundaries and are willing to serve in two or three dioceses).
5. RESIDENTIAL AND CARE PROVISION - I confess that I have a new hero in Canon William Henry Cooper who founded not only St Luke's Hospital for the Clergy (today's St Luke's Healthcare for the Clergy [<http://stlukesforclergy.org.uk>] but also the College of St Barnabas, in Lingfield, which I had the privilege of visiting for the first time a few weeks ago. The latter is currently in the process of working with a new vision which will, I think, preserve all the best of the past whilst responding to the challenges of the present and future. May I add that I think it is well worth exploring if you have reached the point where its community could provide you with accommodation, meals, fellowship, warmth and a certain level of residential care [[The College of St Barnabas | Holistic Care in a Christian Community \(st-barnabas.org.uk\)](#)]. Likewise, I am looking forward to visiting Stuart Court in March, part of the Pensions Board provision [[Stuart Court : HousingCare](#)]
6. CLERGY DISCIPLINE MEASURE - I, and I know many others, are glad that this is now being reformed. From my experience it has been far too easy for it to be used as a threat or even as a weapon against clergy. Clearly, we must be held accountable for our actions but it has been far too easy to abuse it, with horrible consequences in some cases.
7. FEES - I'm aware that this remains something of a minefield with different dioceses doing different things in different ways (what's new in the Church of England?) but I can't help feeling that it would be good if there was greater consistency.
8. THIS NEWSLETTER - For me this is an invaluable resource for information and reflection but I'm very much aware that it's not the Editor's job to produce all that goes in it. It's our newsletter so please

send in articles, book reviews (I've been asked to review Bishop Richard Harries's latest book, 'The Shaping of a Soul' which I much look forward to doing), reflections or whatever.

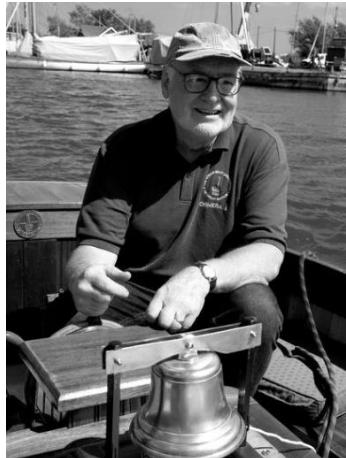
But that's enough from me - and I'm sorry if it's begun to read as a manifesto at times! It's certainly not meant to be that - it's just that these are the things I've been hearing in recent weeks.

Do let me know what I've missed and may I offer you my best wishes for the coming year and beyond

+ Colin



Ruminations from the outgoing Editor:



The American ethicist David Gushee commented in a recent article that the kind of Christian nationalist 'evangelicals' much vaunted in the Deep South really should more rightly be called 'Christianists'.

He argues that with their roots in an unthinking fundamentalism based on a Bible never actually read, the term carries the same weight as 'Islamism' used of radical Muslim groups.

There does seem to be a complete disconnect from the Christianity of the Gospels and the ancient creeds so I think he may have a point. Fortunately we don't have 'Christianists' of quite that radicalised sort here in the UK, but we do have a great deal of Christian 'nominalism' and many kinds of unspecific 'theists'.

I mention it because it has always proved so very difficult for people to determine what needs to be carried through from their history and to disentangle what is 'of faith' from 'what is of culture' because they are entwined in the same column of DNA. This is writ large in Islam with the dictates on what women should wear, but I'm old enough to remember the 'tutting' of certain ladies in church at women having the effrontery to attend worship sans hats or, worse still, wearing trousers '*with the zip at the front!*'

Ultra-Orthodox Judaism with its obligatory sartorial nods to late 19th and early 20th century central European fashion is happy for its people to fly in modern aircraft. Exactly parallel are the traditions of America's Pennsylvania Dutch and Old Order Mennonite groups with their anachronistic dress conventions and horse-drawn buggies – albeit fitted with rubber tyres, electric lighting and hydraulic disc brakes...

To me these bizarre cognitive dissonances make no sense but they signal that uppermost for these communities is their own solidarity and exclusivity although there will be actual 'faith' behind the enshrined customs and behaviours.

Forgive the 'grandmothers and sucking eggs' comment that this kind of non-negotiable human inconsistency is very common in human psychology! We are all affected by it to some degree in the way we practise our religiosity, but people conscious of being marginalised seem to feel it more acutely. The church has addressed it historically by splitting into endless denominations, sects and splinter groups all hanging on to dogmatic ideas from the past and convinced of their utter rightness.

But the Church of England, by the Grace of God, prevails by the skin of its teeth and can celebrate its legacy of gloriously broad ecclesiology and an astonishing range of traditions and theological emphases but all within a common focus.

Our Church year with its cycles of remembrance to draw our attention to the birth, the life the passion, the resurrection and the teachings of the Saviour always highlights for me that we Christians live in a dynamic continuum of history. Much of our Anglican history has been colourful, some of it wonderful, and a very great deal of it disgraceful: but all of it is informative.

If Henry Ford really did declare that 'History is bunk', we also see today that many, even in academia, would like to edit history so that the ultra-sensitive are not upset by the horrors and injustices of the past.

It seems to me therefore that it is surely up to the people of Christ to continue to show that history isn't bunk: the world has stood at similar crossroads time and time again and if we're not careful will go there again. And maybe we retired people, if we're still reasonably warm of body and supple of mind, should continue to focus as energetically as we can on that ultimate Grace of God to remind those around us that the world and its needs are a lot bigger than me and my comfort zones and St Paul's 'foolish' Gospel still provides answers...

This is the last newsletter I will edit but do continue to send material for inclusion and remember that opinions expressed in these hallowed pages are those of the writers and not of the Editor or the RCACoE. You can send contributions to malcolm.liles48@gmail.com

Mark Rudall



Scams! *It seems that retired people are vulnerable to scammers – particularly if we use computers, as practically all of us do.*

Opening the PC to start assembling this newsletter it was alarming to find an official-looking email from McAfee (the virus protection company) advising that because my two year contract was now up they had first thing that morning taken from my 'linked account' the sum of \$599.99.

Caught unawares, the old heart started to pound: '*have I agreed to something I shouldn't?*' ... at that point my ever-calm wife reminded me that we don't have McAfee on our systems at present, nor do we have any kind of 'linked account' and the issuing email address is probably obviously suspect. The email was immediately despatched to 'trash' and the heartrate subsided over the course of the morning. Nasty shock though, for a few moments, because on reading such stuff our world appears to be out of control and we drop into angry victim mode.

I guess the idea was that anyone sufficiently rattled to receive the message would, without thinking for a moment, reach for the phone and call the phone number provided. They would thereupon be sweet-talked and assured their money would be returned. All they need do would be to read over their bank details to ensure that the (imaginary) \$599.99 could be swiftly returned to their (real) bank account – which would be immediately emptied. The scammers also then have the bonus of a personal phone number to add authenticity to any claim on their victim's money.

Two people within my immediate orbit have been affected by this sort of horror of late. A retired Head Teacher was recently led down the garden path by a persuasive scammer and although saved by their bank at the last moment, was on the verge of making a significant payment, while another had their retirement savings severely compromised. Miserable stuff, but a feature of modern times and our on-line world.

So the message is that the first thing to look at when a disturbing email comes that seems to demand an instant response, is the sender's email address. A nameless or otherwise odd email account points immediately to a scam – even if the message seems to know a lot about us. If in doubt, check it out with

someone you know to be more confident with on-line security issues. But primarily, as Cpl Jones might have said, 'Don't panic!' [Ed.]



Red rags and bulls!

We are not surprised that Arthur Champion's lengthy piece on Ukraine in the last newsletter elicited some reaction. There were email comments in both directions and some robust harrumphing too – some of it quite strong to the degree that such opinions should be denied the oxygen of publication.

However, one measured comment from Milton Keynes said simply ... 'I did wonder about the contribution called 'Praying for peace in the Ukraine' which I thought strayed into some dodgy areas. I noted particularly: *'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 ...'* which I thought entered into areas way outside the scope and purpose of such a newsletter.'

That correspondent is dead right: the piece did indeed stray into areas which allowed readers to make their own judgement as to how far along a political 'wing' the writer might have travelled and that's why such a paragraph needs to remain to provide context. An Editor of a newsletter like this must maintain neutrality and because the piece was undeniably very carefully researched it would be wrong not to allow space for an offering which expresses the conclusions of someone who is clearly thinking deeply about an issue. The journal belongs to its contributors (of whom we need more, please!) and its readers.

Personal experience as a News Editor for a newspaper highlights many differences between a newsletter like ours and a traditional 'newspaper of record'. In the latter context, if a possibly contentious piece is received, another opinion piece might be *canvassed* by the newspaper before publication to give another side to what has been expressed. Things move on fast in newsrooms and debates need instant response because there will be something new to report tomorrow. But in our gentle newsletter environment we creep along at snails' pace and we're always after copy. Thus any contrasting view should be equally carefully constructed and sent for inclusion in the next newsletter. Ed.



Simon Holloway Shares how out of the Covid crisis sprang a completely unexpected and very a positive experience

During lockdown, I was asked by the Area Dean to give support to a neighbouring parish from the one which we had decided to attend, just walking distance from our retirement home in Weston-Super-Mare.

So, I committed to take a monthly Communion service for them, while continuing to worship online at our regular church, until in-person services were possible again. I wondered how I might be able to give more personal support.

I read up the history of the church in vacancy and found it used to have a weekly 10am Wednesday Communion in church. In lockdown that was no longer possible, but I enquired if anyone there would like to try a weekly zoom prayer group and just one early-retired man, caring for his terminally sick wife responded.

So we began. I led it each week to start with, choosing a scripture passage, giving a short reflection and inviting any further reflections from the one other man present. We continued to meet, just the two of us

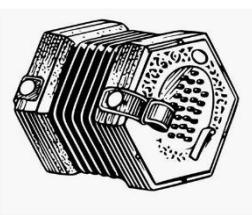
for several months during the darkest days of Covid and it made for good mutual support. Then two friends whom I had known for over 40 years in Bristol wanted to join us. So we expanded our group and took it in turns to lead, choosing a Psalm each time, with sometimes a song, hymn or piece of music to illustrate or accompany the reading.

We have used the Book of Common Prayer, Mission Praise, Songs of Fellowship, classical music and two of our group have used their instrumental music gifts. We were then joined by a widower in Cardiff whose late wife was a priest and friend to three of us. And then another member of the church in Weston joined us, whose wife was also terminally sick.

We have now supported each other through three bereavements over the last two years, but the level of fellowship, prayerfulness, spiritual insight, honesty and compassion has been amazing. Scripture has come alive as we have shared it in a 'Lectio divina' style and prayed for our nation, our world, our churches, leaders and personal needs.

We are now planning our first in-person meeting with all six of us near to Temple Meads Station in Bristol - a natural hub for those of us from Weston and the one from Cardiff. We are even considering a week-long mens' retreat and holiday together next year in West Wales or Cornwall.

How good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity! Psalm 133:1



Folk corner!

Andrew Body and his wife Pippa live and continue their ministry in the Ludlow area and he writes: 'for several years Pippa and I have been sort of 'living Audio-Visual aids' for Oxford Diocese's Pre-Retirement conferences. I wrote a 'hymn' for use at them, which I offer if you think it is worth sharing. For reference, the tune is 'Villikins and his Dinah'!' He adds: '+Colin was a participant on one of these events prior to his retirement - you can check with him what he made of it!'

(The tune 'Villikins and his Dinah' may not be deemed entirely suitable for organ accompaniment in a parish church setting. It's a traditional English folk tune with the resounding theologically infused refrain 'With a touralie, touralie, touralie-ay'. Andrew's excellent lyrics probably need to be sung in a faux West Country accent with one hand cocked around the right ear and the other waving a tankard of real ale.)

Thank God for the hours and the years that we've spent
At Christmas and Easter, in Advent and Lent;
The highs and the lows, the liturgical round
That praise of our Saviour may richly abound.

Thank God for the talks and the sermons we've preached
To the faithful, the seeking we trust we have reached.
Words cast on the waters, some light, some profound,
Like the seeds in the story cast wide on the ground.

Thank God for the people whose lives we could share
In joy and excitement, in grief and despair,
In baptising babies, commending the dead,
Uniting the lovers we've been honoured to wed.

Thank God for communities, village or town,

Those thought to be ord'ny, and those of renown
The faithful and faithless, the lapsed and devout
All precious to God, of whose love there's no doubt.

And now we thank God for what still is to come.
It's hopeful for many, but anxious for some,
Still listening in faith for the call of our Lord
For the new kinds of service we're moving toward.



Independent living for retired clergy: there are vacancies

An interesting letter from two residents of Fosbrooke House in Lytham, Lancashire, received before +Colin's opening letter which alludes to CHARM living, resulted in an enthusiastic telephone conversation:

Rita and Colin Crumpton believe that their decision to retire to one of the 32 apartments at Pension Board-owned (CHARM) 'is one of the best decisions we made in later life'.

They believe that many soon-to-retire priests tend to assume, quite wrongly, that Fosbrooke House, and other CHARM resources like it, are care homes for the elderly: 'Definitely not!' says Colin. Fosbrooke House certainly isn't as here we have fully independent living units in a wonderful sea-facing setting providing a vibrant community offering complete freedom as well as opportunities for shared meals and activities of many kinds if we so wish.'

Rita Crumpton commented that at the time of this writing there could be a number of flats currently vacant in similar CHARM properties in other areas. Clergy nearing retirement should be encouraged to take a close look. They may well be delighted by the opportunities open to them as they look at retirement housing options.

Of course clergy who are not members will not see this note! But members will have friends who will reach retirement age soon and now is the time to drop the hint that this kind of living arrangement is a possibility – and a really good one.

Getting the word out re. membership

A comment arising from the RCACoE AGM at the end of 2022 was that it is not clear how people get to hear about the Association. Their dioceses may tell them as they approach retirement and attend a preparation course. Some dioceses indeed pay for membership, but the word may not be getting out as well as it could be and those of us in membership are urged to 'share the word'. The editor receives occasional messages from members now living overseas: they really appreciate the contact provided by this newsletter and some of our retired clergy living in the UK can also feel quite isolated on occasion.



Struggling to be retired!

You may empathise with this reflection from a retired clerical couple – happy to remain nameless - who are very willing to serve, but the pressure is on...

We never really gave it much thought – what our ministry might look like in retirement - but I guess I had vague ideas about settling into a parish church, offering an 8 o'clock a month, holiday cover, the odd occasional office and one-off projects – a bit of mediation, mentoring or whatever gap the vicar wanted filling. What we hadn't envisaged was becoming a joint pseudo-vicar for eighteen months with no sign of a dog collar coming round the corner and no active steps being taken to recruit one.

Understandably, a bishop's retirement and no permanent archdeacon in post delayed things. There has been lots of talk, meetings and plans including some way-out ideas which take little notice of what it's like to be a vicar on the ground. Combining several rural parishes with little in common brings pressure and stress. Anna Chaplains, pioneers, youth ministers – and any other kind of authorised lay minister – are invaluable and to be welcomed. They do a great job but they can't take the place of a full-time (we'd settle for half!) incumbent wearing a collar and being present and available in the places where ordinary people live, study and work.

Perhaps that's too much to ask and a defunct idea. Maybe we're living in the past and looking back through tinted glasses to those days when the parish was sacrosanct in the Church of England and every square metre was covered by an Anglican presence. For it seems as though that's not what we want to do anymore. Despite loud assurances from the national church that the parish is loved and wanted, the existence of an organisation called Save the Parish speaks for itself.

We know all about financial problems, the legacy of lockdown and the changing culture but it's all too easy to cry 'no resources' or 'pandemic' to justify what we are doing – or not doing. Maybe we have gone the way of all old stagers and joined the ranks of those who say 'It wasn't like that in my day' or 'we tried that in 1982!'.

We don't want to be that person but we can't support a church which seems bent on wasting away. All the evidence points to the fact that, though an incumbent costs, his or her presence brings more cash in through stewardship and enables growth in every direction. His or her leadership makes sure ministry and mission happen.

There's also a question about the care of retired clergy. Fortunately, we are relatively young (68 and 69) and in good health; but our memories, our energy levels and our availability are limiting – and that's only going to go in one direction. Of course, we're enjoying a lot of what we do and the congregation and community are very appreciative. But we don't need placatory strokes: we just want to be retired!



The College of St. Barnabas: A Vision Renewed

Beautifully situated in the south-east corner of Surrey, conveniently located next to Dormans railway station, just to the south of Lingfield Racecourse, and close to the town of East Grinstead is a remarkable establishment, which is the College of St. Barnabas. It is a College in the historic sense of the word – a community of retired people with a shared interest in living together actively and fruitfully in a Christian environment.

The vision for this community was that of Canon William Henry Cooper, who also founded St. Luke's Hospital for the Clergy (now St. Luke's Healthcare). Whilst visiting the south coast he became aware of the needs of impoverished retired clergy without any income living in workhouses and he determined to provide a better environment for them to live in. 'The Homes of St Barnabas' thus came into being,

initially in rented accommodation in Dormans Park and then in 1899, the present handsome, purpose-built structure nearby began construction, and the charitable company which continues to run the establishment came into being. It is built around three sides of a quadrangle in a style redolent of a traditional college or almshouse establishment, with a central hall and chapel, flanked by a library and dining room with cloister ranges extending from the central block. It is a notable example of late Victorian 'picturesque revivalist' architecture by the architects C.H. Rew and C.M. Oldrid Scott, with stained glass in the chapel by C.E. Kempe and F.C. Eden, and is listed Grade II.

Since that time, the rooms in the cloister wings have been upgraded with en-suite facilities and the wards in the central Care Wing have become individual private rooms and the whole estate has been progressively refurbished. The present name of the College of St. Barnabas was adopted in 1977, reflecting the collegiate nature of the community's lifestyle and the study in which many of the residents continue to be engaged. The College can accommodate over 20 people in the Care Wing, and over 40 in the two cloister wings and the flats in nearby Morley House, with some double rooms available for couples. The Care Wing is registered with the Care and Quality Commission as a residential care home and is rated as 'Good', and in my experience provides a more personalised standard of care than is found in many care homes.

The College continues to provide pastimes and activities for residents who wish to avail themselves. The Chapel maintains a rhythm of daily services. The foundation remains Church of England, with regular Anglican worship and a full-time Anglican Chaplain, but residency has now been extended to include Christians of all denominations. However, this significant ecumenical development at the same time preserves the College's priority of accommodating Anglican clergy, missionaries and lay workers and their spouses; and all residents are offered accommodation whatever their means. The College therefore has a substantial fund-raising programme in order to help provide accommodation at the College for clergy who may be in need.

In recent years the College has begun a programme of sensitive modernisation of its buildings coupled with the upgrading of its facilities, and last year the College Council adopted a four-point vision for the College's future development and enhancement, taking into account the need for maximising capacity in a heritage environment, achieving environmental sustainability, and the growing need to provide a more articulated range of services including the option of domiciliary care support for cloister residents.

The College welcomes enquiries from any reader of the Retired Clergy Association Newsletter who might be interested (or who may know someone who might be interested) in coming to the College of St. Barnabas at some point in the future, and we will be glad to arrange an introductory visit. You will find it a friendly, safe and welcoming community which offers a range of shared interests and activities, whilst respecting residents' individuality and desire for personal space and independence, and at the same time recognising their particular needs and circumstances.

We have a regular residents' programme of outside speakers, and on January 10th we were pleased to welcome Bishop Colin (an old friend of mine, and my former area bishop) in his new capacity as Chairman of the RCA, to visit the College and to give a talk (after lunch with the residents) about ministry in retirement and the role of the Association. Residents found it an engaging and stimulating talk and it engendered a goodly range of interesting questions which were fielded by Colin with his customary warmth and humour. There follows a piece by him reflecting on his very full day at the College of St. Barnabas.

David Williams

Chairman of the College Council (*formerly Clerk to the General Synod, subsequently incumbent and area dean in the Oxford Diocese, and now actively retired in the dioceses of Guildford and Southwark*)

TO LET - PEPYS HOUSE, BRAMPTON, HUNTINGDON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE PE28 4PA

The Clergy Support Trust suggested I write to you about this house in Cambridgeshire to enquire if it might be of interest to any retired clergy. I am the chairman of the Pepys House Trust which has been letting the whole house for many years. Our tenants recently left and, in conjunction with finding new tenants, we're now taking the opportunity to plan the first stage of opening the house more regularly (by appointment and for certain open days) to visitors in order to create more awareness of and a higher profile for Pepys's only surviving abode.

To that end we intend to "dress" in C17 style the three downstairs front rooms, and one bedroom upstairs. The prospective new tenants would have exclusive private use of two bedrooms, bathroom, drawing room and dining room. The only "sharing" involved would be when the visiting curators were staying (having their own bedroom and bathroom) as they'd obviously wish to make breakfast etc in the kitchen. I attach further info and a floorplan.

A unique opportunity to occupy private rooms in an important Grade I listed historic building belonging to renowned 17th century diarist Samuel Pepys



The trustees of Pepys House Trust seek assured shorthold tenants, initially for 12 months from March 2023 (or thereabouts), to live in part of the house. The rent will be commensurate with the tenants' co-operation in the opening of certain rooms and the garden to visitors by appointment and on open days, which will be led by visiting curators.

The property is suitable for one or two adults, no children (pets by negotiation). The tenants' space comprises:

1st floor

- 2 double bedrooms
- Large bathroom with bath, shower and WC
- Large drawing room

Ground floor

- Dining room
- Fully equipped kitchen *which may be used from time to time by the visiting curators*
- Utility/boot room and separate WC

Please note: Bedroom 3 and bathroom 2 will be reserved for the visiting curators. Bedroom 4 and three ground floor rooms (at the front of the house) will be reserved for visitors and exhibitions and used by the visiting curators. These visits will be occasional and dates agreed in advance with the tenants.

The property will be let furnished or unfurnished; wifi provided.



Background and history Pepys House is often referred to in the Diary, and is his only extant abode. It lies in meadowland with a flat fenland landscape to the east of the village, downhill from Hinchingbrooke House, the home of Pepys's patron and cousin, Sir Edward Montagu, later first Earl of Sandwich. Pepys described the landscape as "the largest and most flowery spot the sun ever beheld".

Its core is a long rectangular timber framed house, probably built towards the end of the 16th century as a single pile (one room deep) with a cross-wing of an uncertain date. A parallel wing was added in the 18th century.

It was originally owned by Pepys's uncle, Robert, who was probably employed as a bailiff by the Montagus at Hinchingbrooke. Pepys's family and forebears came from Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, and he attended Huntingdon grammar school (alma mater of both Cromwell and Montagu) for a short spell during the Civil War, probably staying in Brampton. When an undergraduate at Magdalene College, Cambridge he must also have visited his uncle.

Pepys inherited the house on Robert's death in 1661 and installed his parents and sister, Paulina, there. Although he never lived there permanently, Pepys regularly visited Brampton for the rest of his life. After his death his heir and nephew, John Jackson, let the house to a succession of tenants. Later in the 18th century it was absorbed into the Hinchingbrooke estate.

In 1927 the ninth Earl of Sandwich granted a 99 year lease to the Samuel Pepys Club which commissioned the Scottish architect, W A Forsyth, to restore the house. His work had a considerable impact and is an important part of the history of the building. The Club continued to let Pepys House, its first tenant being the poet John Drinkwater. In 1963 six acres of surrounding meadowland were purchased freehold to

maintain the site's integrity and, in 1971, the Club's leasehold was transferred to a charitable trust.

In 2017 the Pepys House Trust was fortunate in being able to acquire the freehold of the house (now combined with the freehold of the meadow) thanks to generous private loans.

PAUL GRAY Haremoor House Faringdon Oxon SN7 8PN 07802 301297 plgray@btinternet.com



Deanery Synod Elections are near!

Yes, it's nearly time for elections to Deanery Synods, Church representation rules allow the election of one person with PTO per 10 clergy with PTO resident in a deanery. This is something that few Area Deans and Deanery Synod secretaries know but if anyone is thinking of taking up this option now is the time to prepare. Lists of clergy with PTO should be available from Bishop's Office or Area Deans, if there are more than 10 clergy with PTO in a deanery then it may be possible to elect two people. Unless members take up this opportunity the case of the retired is unlikely to find a place in the church's discussions for the next 3 years, and we know that many of our members have strong views that they are ready to express!

Malcolm Liles

The Visual Commentary on Scripture

I wonder how many of us are aware of this relatively new aid to service and sermon preparation, or simply for use at home to support prayerful recollection. It is a freely available online publication providing theological commentary on the Bible in dialogue with works of art. The resource opens up a wealth of themes, symbolism, history and interpretation. Each section of the VCS is a virtual exhibition comprising a biblical passage, three high-resolution (zoomable) art works, and short commentaries exploring how the scripture and the artworks illuminate each other.

Each section of the VCS.org is a virtual exhibition comprising a biblical passage, three artworks, and their associated commentaries. The curator of each exhibition selects artworks that they consider will open up the biblical texts for interpretation, and/or offer new perspectives on the themes the texts address. Go to <https://thevcs.org/>

Any Issues? On 3rd March some members of the Council will be meeting with the NCIs on zoom. I would be grateful to receive from members and questions or issues they would like us to raise at this meeting. NCI responses will be in the next newsletter as they were in last October's newsletter.

We shall also be holding our own Council meeting on the 9th March so I would be grateful for agenda items from members for that meeting. malcolm.liles48@gmail.com

Annual General Meeting We shall be holding our AGM on 14th September at Bishopthorpe York, thanks to a kind offer by the Archbishop of York, beginning at 11am and ending around 3-3.30pm. Numbers are limited to 50 so I would be grateful to receive indications from members about attendance at this event in the coming months. We have not been able to hold in-person meetings for some time so it will be good to actually MEET! malcolm.liles48@gmail.com

Please send items for the next newsletter as soon as possible to the email address above.