

From the Chair: the Rt Revd Colin Fletcher writes:

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I was remembering that it was almost exactly a year ago that a letter arrived for me from the Bishop of Guildford asking if I would be willing for my name to go forward as a possible successor to Bishop Ian Brackley as the Chairman of the RCAcE. I confess that at that stage I knew rather little about our excellent Association, but I decided to take things further, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Over the past six months, since my election in October, I have continued with my aim of getting to know more about the challenges and opportunities our members face in a period of rapid change, not least so far as inflation and the Cost of Living are concerned. It has been good to get to know more about CHARMERS (the organisation that brings together those who live in CHARM properties owned by the Pensions Board); the Pensions Board itself, and its excellent Chief Executive, John Ball; Bishop Chris Goldsmith, the national Director of Ministry since 2019, who retires later this summer, to talk about ministry in retirement; the Clergy Support Trust, so ably led by Ben Cahill-Nicholls, and the increasing number of requests for support that they are receiving at the moment, so many of which, happily, they can respond positively to (if you can be in London on May 9th don't miss out on the chance to come to their Festival Choral Evensong at St Paul's); and, most of all, our Council's Secretary, and Editor of this Newsletter, Malcolm Liles, and our Vice-Chairman, David Pritchard.

From all these conversations I wouldn't want to add to the list of issues that I outlined in the last Newsletter but it has been good to put more flesh on them in helping us to fulfil one of our primary aims of 'representing the interests of all retired clergy at national level'. Our latest work, which Malcolm highlights elsewhere, is to try to gauge what fees are paid in different dioceses for Sunday Duties, in the hope that they can become more equitable when seen overall, and I will be talking about this, amongst other things, with our President, the Bishop of Guildford, when I meet him later in the Summer.

As I mentioned in my last letter, I have especially enjoyed visiting the College of St Barnabas, an independent charity, and also, more recently, Stuart Court, in the Leicester Diocese, that is run by the Pensions Board. Both of them provide good quality accommodation for their residents and, just as importantly, a strong worshipping and social community to belong to. I asked one group what it was that had led them to move there and back came the response from one member, 'Loneliness'. All of us have, I suspect, known what life has been like in a busy parish with all sorts of demands pressing upon our time. For some of us that has continued long into retirement, with many of us still heavily involved in taking regular services and the occasional offices, as well as more informal Home Groups and the like. But for some there comes a point when for all sorts of reasons there is much less human contact and, as Covid taught us again and again, that can be quite debilitating. How good it is, therefore, to know that places like the seven Pension Board Homes, St Barnabas, and others exist to be there as an option in later life. As an

aside I'd also add that if you think they might be unaffordable it's always worth asking to see if there are ways in which circles might be squared.

And what of my own retirement? Well, there is, of course, the standard question that I am asked on many an occasion, 'How are you finding/enjoying retirement?'. I confess that it's not been one that I've found easy to answer, and my usual response recently has been simply to say, 'increasingly'. In the main, I thoroughly enjoyed all the posts I have been privileged to serve in during the course of my ministry, and there's a lot about being the Bishop of Dorchester that I miss, but I love the flexibility and the opportunity to do new things that retirement brings.

One thing too that I value is the freedom to read substantial books, and not simply to be facing huge piles of synodical papers. As well as Bishop Richard Harries's latest book which I've reviewed later in this Newsletter I've been greatly enjoying Nicholas Orme's book 'Going to Church in Medieval England'. Whilst others can write in more detail, and at greater length, he has the breadth of knowledge to tie together questions of architecture, liturgy, the ecclesiastical calendar and many other aspects of church life into a single whole, which is a remarkable achievement. My next challenge is to read a still longer tome, 'The Dissolution of the Monasteries' by James G Clark, though I may not be able to report on that until another newsletter has passed.

I end, as always, by thanking you for being members of the Association and wishing you all the very best for this Easter and beyond.

With every blessing +Colin Fletcher



A spotlight on Retirement Housing Services *A guest article by the Church of England Pensions Board*

Colleagues from the RCA meet a few times a year with members of the team at the Church of England Pensions Board, to discuss news and matters of interest on pensions, the Board's approach to responsible investment, and retirement housing.

Following on from our most recent meeting, we were invited to give all RCA members more insight into the ongoing support that is available once a resident moves into one of the Board's rental properties. This support is coordinated through our Housing Services team.

Here is a short interview with Nick, who manages this part of our service. Nick has been with the Board for around three and a half years, having spent most of his career in housing (within the social housing and private sector, with some experience too of Environmental Health and Adult Social Care).



AN INTERVIEW WITH NICK GRIFFITHS, HOUSING MANAGER

What does the Housing Services team do? The Housing Services Team are the first point of contact for any retiring (or retired) member of the clergy who might need help finding the right home for their retirement.

We walk with people through the process of applying to the Board for help, to exploring options with the Board and other providers, finding a property from within our portfolio, to then moving in.

Once a resident moves into one of our properties, the team continues to act as the main point of contact for any questions or concerns our customers have regarding their home or their tenancy.

We also are often the first port of call for our residents when circumstances change during retirement. We can help discuss potential moves, or help individuals access services that enable them to live independently in their homes for as long as possible (through our Housing Support service). Through our Welfare Advice service, we can also offer help if someone is struggling financially. These services are available to retired clergy, whether you live in a Pensions Board property or not.

Last year, we also attended pre-retirement seminars run by around 30 Dioceses, to talk about the services the Board provides, and to encourage anyone in need of help with retirement housing to contact us as early as possible.

I really enjoy my role as it allows me to meet and talk with so many different people every week, on such a wide range of topics. The most enjoyable part of the job is getting to know our customers, who have given so much to the Church in so many different ways. Our core purpose as a team is to support them as they plan for and live their retirement.

How does the team work? Our team comprises seven members, including myself.

We have four Housing Officers who each cover a specific area of England and Wales, a Welfare Benefits Advisor, and a Housing Support Officer.

While much of our communication with residents happens through telephone and email, we also arrange virtual 'face to face' meetings through Teams and Zoom. A significant portion of our time is also spent travelling throughout England and Wales to meet with residents in person. We aim to meet up as a team once a week.

If I am a resident in a rental property, how often would I expect to hear from my Housing Officer?

This depends on your circumstances. Every resident is assigned a Housing Officer to be their main point of contact with the Board based on the area in which they live. Currently our Housing Officers are:

- Sarah Funnell for the Midlands
- Moses Kajubi for the South West
- Adam Preskey for the North of England
- Adam Szatybelko for the South East

If you are content in your home, you won't normally hear much from us, unless an issue arises that we need to discuss. We are though always at the end of the phone to discuss any questions you may have.

When would I get in touch about Housing Support? If at any point in your retirement, you are worried about managing in your home e.g. due to changing health or personal circumstances, please do get in touch with us.

Our Housing Support Officer, Suzanne French, is there to help residents access services that enable them to be independent and comfortable in their homes. She possesses a wealth of information regarding available services and can assist with a variety of issues, ranging from securing regular garden maintenance, cleaning and decluttering services to accessing programs that promote general health and wellbeing. She can also provide advice on where to seek assistance with household aids and adaptations, and works with individuals and families exploring residential care.

What can the Welfare Advice service help me with? Our Welfare Advice service is designed to support any household who is struggling financially, with help to check entitlements for and navigate the complexities

of state benefits, as well as support to apply for grants from clergy charities, the Board's own grant scheme, and to provide advice on funding for care.

How does the Welfare Advice service work? Our Welfare Benefits Advisor is Daniel Williams, who has been here since late last year. He has a wealth of knowledge around the various benefits and charitable grants that residents might be able to apply for if they are struggling financially.

Daniel will first take time to get to know you and your circumstances, to help inform his advice to you about the support available. Often grants and other forms of financial help are subject to means testing, which we recognise can be stressful. Daniel can therefore not only offer advice about how and where to apply for help, but also support you through any application process as needed.

How do I get in touch with the team? Firstly, there is lots of information on our webpages which can be found on the Church of England website here: www.churchofengland.org/housing

Our helpline telephone number is 0207 898 1824 and our email address is housingservices@churchofengland.org.

We also have individual telephone numbers and email addresses and once we have started a conversation with you, we will make sure these are provided to you.

We are always happy to hear from anyone who might need us. If after reading this article, you have any questions at all, please get in touch.



SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ROLE OF A DIOCESAN RETIRED CLERGY OFFICER (DRCO)

While every diocese makes its own arrangements for the care and support of retired clergy and their families, the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (RACS) documents ("Supporting clergy to prepare for retirement"; "Supporting the ministry of clergy after retirement"; "Ministry after retiring from office") together with the Pensions Board publication "Planning for retirement" explain what good practice could and should look like. All these publications can be found in the 'Useful Information' section of the RCACoE website <https://rcacoe.org/useful-information/>

All DRCOs can make good of these documents by ensuring that:

- all retirement officers read these documents
- serving clergy know about these documents and the recommendations about planning early for retirement
- diocesan senior staff embed recommended good practice across their own diocese.

On reading them you'll see that the gift of life membership of the RCACoE is commended in two of them: "Supporting clergy to prepare for retirement" para 10 and "Supporting the ministry of clergy after retirement" para 55.

As these documents have been enormously helpful to the retired clergy team in my own diocese I commend them to all DRCOs and their colleagues to further the good work they do in every diocese.

David Pritchard (Council member and Retired Clergy Officer for the Diocese of Ely)

"Planning for retirement" (revised January 2023) is aimed at those who are considering retiring now as well as for those planning ahead. In just ten pages it offers answers to the following questions/topics: What should I think about now?

What pensions do I have?
How much will I need?
When and where do I want to retire?
Help with retirement housing.
Ministry and retirement.
Preparing for retirement timeline.
What will pass to my loved ones?
Do I need advice?

It acknowledges that one of the hardest aspects of planning for retirement is deciding when to retire. Another major question is location: where to live when you retire. There is constant encouragement to plan ahead “the earlier you start looking the more options you are likely to have”. The ‘Preparing for retirement’ timeline recommends what to do 5 years before retirement and what to do in the final year before retirement.

“Supporting clergy to prepare for retirement” Paragraphs 5 and 6 state the purpose of this document as follows:

This guidance has been produced to assist bishops, archdeacons and senior staff in supporting clergy to prepare for retirement from office in a way that will enable them, if they wish, to continue to have a fruitful and flourishing ministry and to contribute towards the Church’s mission once they have retired.....

Bishops are encouraged to share this document with rural/area deans, retirement officers and senior staff who have contact with and prepare retirement courses for retired clergy.

Attendance from the age of 55 at pre-retirement courses for clergy, spouses and civil partners is recommended and the DRCO is ideally placed to help the diocese implement this. Also recommended is the gift of Life membership of the RCACoE. The benefits of obtaining long term financial planning and where to find it are highlighted in paragraphs 11-14 as well as the need for discussions with the Pensions Board at least 5 years before retirement.

After explaining the different options for ministry in retirement (paragraphs 20ff) later paragraphs stress the importance of embedding planning for retirement in Ministerial Development Reviews (MDR) from the age of 40 and Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) programmes.

“Supporting the ministry of clergy after retirement” This guidance has been produced to assist bishops, archdeacons and senior staff in encouraging clergy to have a flourishing ministry in retirement and in promoting a culture that enables clergy to continue to contribute towards the Church’s mission and ministry after they have retired from office or employment.

It provides brief summaries of the current position on the subjects listed below and indicates where further guidance and information can be found:

Retirement age
Ministry after retirement, and permission to officiate (PTO)
Holding office after retirement age
Designating people to be responsible for the ministry of clergy on PTO
Occasional offices and parochial fees
Expenses
Ministerial Review and Continuing Ministerial Development
Pastoral Care
Disciplinary and capability procedures
Safeguarding and safeguarding training in retirement
Representation

Communications

Further ways of supporting the ministry of retired clergy.

As retired clergy are more involved than ever in the life of their local parish/deanery section 14 of this document offers the following helpful advice:

It is desirable to encourage a culture where retired clergy are represented in diocesan structures and feel able to participate in the life of the diocese. Those with permission to officiate have the statutory right to elect one of their numbers, for every ten or less in a deanery, onto the house of clergy of the deanery synod. Those so elected may vote and stand as candidates in Diocesan and General Synod elections. The Deanery Synod may also co-opt those with permission to officiate.

Deanery synods should be encouraged to include some clergy with permission to officiate, as those who are members of their deanery synods can both vote in the General Synod election and indeed stand for election themselves.

Clergy with permission to officiate do not have an automatic right to be members of the deanery clergy chapter.....they will attend by invitation rather than by right. Practice may vary in different deaneries: some deaneries may have meetings for licensed and beneficed clergy only; others may invite retired clergy to some or all of their meetings. Some deaneries have separate chapter meetings for retired clergy.

It is recommended that, at the very least, all deaneries, should occasionally, have a meeting to which all with a permission to officiate are invited. However retired clergy are represented within a deanery, it is important to encourage stipendiary clergy to be inclusive about welcoming retired clergy and to be imaginative about how their gifts can be used, rather than assuming that they are only there to provide cover and take occasional offices.

“Ministry after retiring from office” The opening paragraph of this document reads:

Ordination to the Priesthood, in the Church of England, is understood as a life-long vocation. You remain ordained as a priest after retiring from office and have a vocation to ministry even if it takes a different form in retirement. Retirement does not mean that the demands of your vocation have ceased, although your ministry may take a different form, which may include new challenges.

As well as ending with some helpful FAQs this document sets out a Timeline for Retirement (page 9) and responds to these three important questions:

What do I need to think about in planning for my retirement?

Do I need to retire at a certain age?

What forms of ministry can I carry out in retirement?



Review of 'The Shaping of a Soul - A life taken by surprise' by Bishop Richard Harries. John Hunt Publishing. Paperback. £18.99

'Surprise' lies at the heart of this new book by Bishop Richard Harries.

On the one hand it reads at times like many another autobiography, which would make it interesting enough, but it goes far beyond that as he explores the surprises that have shaped him as a person. He charts the story of his life to date, through his schooldays, university, and theological college, to a curacy in Hampstead, followed by his time at Wells Theological College, as a vicar in Fulham, Dean of Kings College, London, and then Bishop of Oxford for the years 1987 - 2006, but, as you would expect from Bishop

Richard the book goes well beyond a dull recitation of facts about his life, which is why I am commending it warmly to our members.

He takes the opportunity to explore the forces, the poetry, the art and the thinkers that have shaped him and which have made him the whole person - the soul - who he is. And within that process the theme of 'surprise' erupts time and again. Surprise that he began to contemplate ordination when he looked all set to become an army officer and had so little experience of the Church of England (and even less that was in any way positive). Surprise when he first met, and then fell in love, with Jo, his wife of so many years. Surprise as he used his many talents to explore moral questions as diverse as human sexuality, the investment policies of the Church Commissioners, the ethical status of the embryo, and Just War Theory and nuclear deterrence, and coupled these with his life-long passion for art, poetry and great literature, and in building relationships with members of other faiths and also of other Christian traditions.

Those who know him through his contributions to 'Prayer for the Day' and 'Thought for the Day' will not, perhaps, be surprised to find that his life has been quite so fascinating, but part of the joy of reading this book is the way that he combines beautifully clear writing with deep thinking. For those of us whose ministries have overlapped with his one way and another, it also provides a mirror to contemplate our own surprises.

But, unlike many an autobiography, some of its most profound reflections come as he contemplates the future. The final pages, looking to death and resurrection, I found profoundly moving and full of hope. They come as a glorious antidote to the way our society seeks to ignore or gloss over the reality of mortality, and in saying that I will leave Richard to have the final word.

'I have a passionate commitment to the good purpose of God and trust that his love cannot finally fail. All through the Bible there is the hope that one day his kingdom will come, all that is wrong will be righted and everything will flourish as God intends. I also believe that the person I truly am is known to God and is as it were lodged in his heart. In Christ he has promised that this person will be clothed in immortality. So I am not fearful of death, though like most human beings I am apprehensive about the process of dying. I hope to die with the words of Jesus in my mind, if not on my lips, 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit', the prayer from Psalm 31, which every Jewish mother taught their children to say at night. This is to face death in hope. I have no idea how this hope might be fulfilled, nor do I need to know.....To let go into death in an act of trust and a spirit of hope - with everything to look forward to.....God has the power still to surprise us'.

+Colin Fletcher



Questions and answers from the RCACoE zoom meeting with the NCIs 3rd March 2023

We have received messages from retired clergy expressing thanks to the PB for the discretionary rise in pensions for 2023/4, bearing in mind that this year's increase does not restore the value of the pension as it was 20 years ago but is a step in the right direction, what is the possibility of a further discretionary rise in 2024/5 if the September inflation figure in 2023 is substantially higher than 5%? ***The PB would be under an obligation to review the situation but the pension will not necessarily rise above 5%. Relevant factors would be reviewed by the Board. The PB/CC may not act in lockstep. It was agreed it would have been better to advise of the rise before Christmas but there was an issue regarding Pensions Online.***

Charm rents are being increased by the same level of uplift as clergy pensions, How can RCACoE help the PB in obtaining more income from the Vote 5 allocation towards rental costs and enabling net carbon zero

to succeed by 2030? **John Ball will get back to us on this. (See the update from the Pensions Board after this article)**

How does PB justify the 10.1% rise in rents when other social housing is going up by 7%. We were told that PB set its rents in line with social housing, but is not doing so this year. **The PB want to hear from people seriously affected by this rise. 75% of rent is spent on financing costs, some PB borrowing is RPI linked and interest linked. It is currently more difficult to purchase houses as a result of collapsing chains and lower disposal values. The increase is not sufficient to pay for increased financing costs. The target rent formula is still being used but this will from time to time be at odds with the social rent sector. The allocation for net zero comes from CC and Vote 5. If people are caught in a benefit trap they should approach the new PB welfare officer for advice.**

There is still considerable difference of practice between dioceses with regard to Safeguarding Training, how can more use of the PTO Pathway be encouraged. With a number of dioceses instigating focal ministry will these ministers also use the PTO Pathway? **The PtO Pathway has been released to all dioceses as an alternative training option to the full Leadership Pathway. It is not a mandatory pathway and dioceses can opt out of using it, which some do with instructions from Bishops being for all PtO clergy to complete the leadership pathway. Whilst there have been some people who have decided to give up their PtO this is not, to our knowledge a significant number and usually also combines with other personal reasons for giving up PtO. We continue to encourage the use of the PtO Pathway as feedback from those who complete is wholly positive.**

There is a problem sometimes in the acceptance of retired PTO clergy into Deanery Chapters in some areas, yet they participate in ministry in those areas, and have undertaken appropriate safeguarding courses, what can be done to encourage their acceptance into deanery chapters? **This would require wording change in an old document issued by RACS. Participation was to be encouraged, it was hoped that chapters would be as open as possible. Ultimately it would be up to the Bishop to encourage inclusion in chapter. This will be taken back to RACS.**

Are you aware of any good models to integrate the retired with PTO into deanery life? **No.**

Do you know how many dioceses are actually running or sharing in running retirement courses? **No**



There are vacancies arising on the RCACoE National Council

Two of our council members have decided to stand down in the near future, Clive Harper and Gregory Clifton-Smith, we thank them for their years of service on council.

Clive represented Durham, Leeds, Newcastle, and York dioceses. Gregory Guildford, Portsmouth, and Winchester dioceses. So we are looking for volunteers, or nominations from members in those dioceses to replace them on council. Any offers should be forwarded to Malcolm Liles at malcolm.liles@gmail.com as soon as possible. Council would especially welcome women priests to replace Clive and Gregory. If there is more than one nomination for each region there will be an election via the July newsletter.

The role of a council member is to be in touch with the Retirement Officers in the dioceses they represent and to produce a regional report twice a year for consideration by council. These help inform our actions and relationships with the national church institutions and other bodies.



Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.

In 2019 we came to the North-East and settled into an apartment; it was difficult to leave our house and garden in Rugby and come to 'a strange land' but, four years on, having come through a number of 'toils and snares' we are settling into becoming adoptive Geordies, though the accent escapes me.

When we arrived, we looked out towards the sea though did not see much because, in our immediate sight, loomed a fairly large old house, slightly dilapidated and home to a number of young people who came and went and generally occupied the house without, apparently, doing much towards its upkeep. But, understandably, because the owners had decided to sell the house and all the surrounding land.

But, in the meantime we observed a pair of sea gulls who had set up home on part of the flat roof next door and, in the past few years, watched as they raised several broods of young sea gulls who have successfully fledged and flown away.

In due course of time, the intention of the owners to sell became a reality and, following the marketing of the property, the 'estate' acquired new owners who decided to knock down the property and build a new, state of the art house, eco-friendly and modern.

As I write this article the house next door has been demolished. This has yielded a number of effects:

We have witnessed first-hand the destructive power of some machinery which, in a short space of time, knocked and pulled down two significant buildings producing huge piles of wood and rubble, all of which has been cleared away very effectively; our view has improved immeasurably and lighthouses and sea views have become a present reality; the two seagulls have been made homeless.

Although I am told we cannot visit mere birds with human emotions, nonetheless, it has been sad watching their reactions as, piece by piece, their nesting place has disappeared; occasionally, one could see them perched together and ruminating on the plight they found themselves in. It seemed they nurtured hope that something of the old property would be left and would provide a place to 'set up home', as they systematically sat on various vantage points to view the demolition.

But now it is all gone and, this morning, we saw one of them picking up sticks and, apparently, preparing to build a new home elsewhere; but what do we know?

Homelessness is a real and present issue; I do not mean the sea gulls who, no doubt, will prosper in a new place, not needing planning permission or any real human impediment to get in their way; but the words of Jesus from Matthew's Gospel, featured at the head of this article, have a contemporary ring about them; not just in the UK where homelessness has once more become a real issue as to quality and availability and ordinary people are struggling to find a place to lay their heads, but in the wider world.

Millions of people all over the world are searching for a place to live and work and bring up children. And we cannot blame God for it! As we reflect on immediate past history we see some of the seeds of our present situation in the destruction of the Twin Towers, the Iraq war, the occupation of Afghanistan and

indiscriminate bombing by powerful nations seeking to inhabit Naboth's vineyard. And Covid and Brexit have not helped.

And once more the words of Jesus echo in the hearts of millions of people around the world as the flood of refugees increases and people of every colour and creed seek to find a home.

I have no answers; politicians seek solutions and do their best but they and we are struggling against the tide, a tide of desperate human beings, infiltrated no doubt by others of more sinister purpose.

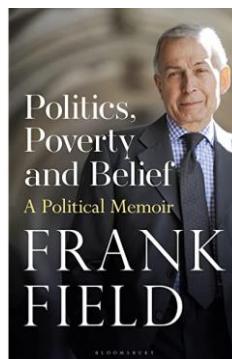
But what we can say is this: God in Christ identifies with the homeless and the refugee; He identifies with those who have left home and kindred seeking to serve Him and human kind; and if we trust Him, one way or another He will provide; the Cross is there to give us the reassurance we need and to thank Him when His promises become a reality in our lives.

Clive Harper (Rev) Easter 2023

Politics, Poverty and Belief. A political memoir

Frank Field

Bloomsbury, London, 2023 202pp £20
(978-1-3994-0839-4)



I caught the end of an interview with Frank Field about this book on Radio 4 where reference was made to his Christian faith. Field's reply was along the lines of "Oh, I don't have faith, it's just that I find Christianity the most convincing option among many: I have no certainty". This intrigued me, and I understand this to mean he has no emotional religious commitment: just that he believes, but cannot prove, Christianity to be ultimately true. (I would hold that this is, of course, an exercise of faith.)

Field managed to be expelled from the Young Conservatives as a teenager, to be expelled from the Labour Party after over sixty years of membership, most as the MP for Birkenhead, to be admired by Margaret Thatcher as well as to nominate Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour party. An iconoclastic figure who could never be relied on to do the expected thing.

This book sets his political career firmly in the context of his Christian faith, something that he never put in the front of his political life as far as publicity was concerned. It was nurtured as a child in the rather 'low church' Anglo-Catholic parish of St Nicholas, Chiswick, where he learned that human beings are both fallen and also redeemed, that there can be glory in simple acts such as the procession from the dark of the sacristy to the light of the sanctuary, and that God was always far bigger than anything human beings could grasp or imagine. It was a church that would have nothing to do with the fussy ceremonial of high Catholicism. It was also a church that, in many ways, failed to teach this young member anything of the depth of thought and spirituality of Christian Social Theory (he rather disliked the term Christian Socialism as it seemed to imply that you couldn't be a good Christian and a Tory or a Liberal: and he knew several).

A whole chapter of the book is devoted to exploring the idea of a sacramental universe, and that God was either in everything, or he was nowhere. He had read *Lux Mundi* as part of building his own scaffolding of faith and belief, so lacking in his church upbringing, and I wonder if this observation was a result of reading Aubrey Moore's contribution, where he writes "Darwinism appeared, and under the guise of a foe, did

the work of a friend. It has conferred upon philosophy and religion an inestimable benefit, by showing us that we must choose between two alternatives. Either God is everywhere present in nature, or he is nowhere." This book, which is a light and easy read, keeps surprising: is it a political book, or a work of theology? There are not many who can achieve both in such an accessible style and this is reinforced by the longish introduction from Brian and Rachel Griffiths, (now Lord Griffiths) from the other end of the political spectrum, a close personal friend and his encourager to write this book. Griffiths comes with a committed conservative evangelical social theology and moved across the political spectrum for left to right as Field moved from right to left!

Because we are fallen Field recognised that altruism alone cannot be a robust political policy. Self- interest must be taken into account, some of which is good, and some at the expense of others. Field develops what he calls "Self-interested altruism" as a political approach.

As a local councillor in London, before becoming an MP, he visited a council tenant in a tower block who complained that a door on the landing outside was faulty, continually banging in the wind, and that he'd reported it to the council many times and nothing has happened. "Well, why don't you fix it yourself?" Field replied. "What do you think I pay my rent for" was the retort. This was salutary for Field as he realised that many council tenants had no financial interest in the property they were in and led in many cases to a dependency culture. The answer, he believed, was to share the equity with the residents which would involve selling council houses to their residents and use the money raised to build new houses and repair and improve existing ones. As an MP he tried to promote this when Labour was in power and it had the support of both Wilson and Callaghan (this was a surprise to learn), but civil servants repeatedly claimed such a process was impossible to deliver and it never became Labour policy. It had to wait for Margaret Thatcher who made it happen – but crucially, used the money, not for replacement housing, but to reduce taxation.

A disturbing part of the book is where he attempts to analyse the decline in respect in society and the breakdown of family values. He attributes this largely to the loss of manufacturing jobs where the man brought back a wage that supported his family and gave respect. He ties this in to a decline in Christian values, the diminution of the moral foundation of the Labour Party, and the loss of the English philosophical idealism that earlier motivated so many in public life when they had moved away from their Christian faith. I am not so convinced here as society saw similar upheavals in the industrial revolution when machines replaced human muscle power.

However, the whole book is a challenging and informative read for all who may be politically or religiously tribal. **Mike Parsons**

Fees-the beginning of a survey

Following the last newsletter we have had correspondence from members concerned about the level of fees in their dioceses. So, for our last meeting we asked our regional reps. To ask RCOs about Particularly Sunday duty fees. This has brought a wide range of figures even within regions. If your diocese is not mentioned below could you please let us know what the appropriate figure is.

Gloucester £78, Derby £62, Liverpool £62, Lichfield £62, St. Albans £62, Bristol £56, Ely £55, Hereford £45, Guildford £42, Exeter £41, Worcester £40.91, Southwark £40.40, Salisbury £40, Chelmsford £38, Bath and Wells £38, Leeds £37, Norwich £37.50, Winchester £35.50, Sheffield £35, Portsmouth £32.50, York £30, Birmingham £30, Newcastle £30, Durham £27.50, St. Eds+Ips £25

Deanery Synod Elections are here!

Its 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! Recent correspondence about the rise in CHARM rents shows the need for more representation of the retired on Deanery and Diocesan Synods. **Malcolm Liles**



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 before the end of July. 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



A POSTCARD from CANNES. February 2023 by Simon & Pauline Holloway, Weston Super Mare.

It was in August last year that we took a surprise phone call from **Giles Williams**, the Chaplain of Holy Trinity Cannes. *'Would you be willing to come and do a Locum in Cannes over Christmas for the two months of December and January?'* My wife and I consulted family, prayed and accepted! However, this did not come in a vacuum, as we had already been accepted for the Diocese in Europe and two other Locums had fallen through due to Covid and other matters.

Holy Trinity Cannes (<https://holytrinitycannes.org>) is an ICS (Intercontinental Church Society) Chaplaincy, an Evangelical CoE Mission set up in 1823 to provide ministry to English-speakers abroad, mainly in Europe but also further afield. The Cannes church was founded in 1874, but by the 1960s it needed a new building and so the site was sold to a developer. A new church was opened in 1972 providing facilities for a wide range of church and community activities, with a Chaplain's apartment and two studio flats for guests also available. A block of apartments was built next door.

So, after months of preparation and consultation with the retiring Chaplain, we arrived the day after he and his wife left for retirement in Kent. We flew into Nice Cote d'Azur airport right by the Med and were collected and driven along the A8 motorway the 20 miles or so to Cannes.

Cannes developed as a holiday resort and retirement town for Brits and also Russians in the 19th Century. One notable regular visitor to the area was **Sir Winston Churchill** in the 1930s. It became the playground of the rich and famous, as **Prince Aly Khan**, son of the Aga Khan also lived here until his unexpected death in the 1960s. The Saudi Royal family now own a Villa just East of Cannes, with its own private access to the

Med. The International Film Festival is held annually in May at the Palais de Festivals, where we took photos on the red carpet!

On our first weekend, Pauline had a serious hypoxic attack and spent three days in a local Public Hospital and given good care, even if not enough tea was provided! She was quickly diagnosed – not Covid but just a Bacterial infection, which cleared up with Antibiotics. She had some further tests and a Lung Scan, but all was clear. We thanked God for good care. (GHIC card was needed & Medical Insurance)

Simon joined the monthly Prayer Breakfast (coffee & croissants) on the first Saturday morning. Simon led the weekly 9am communion while locals led the 10.30am service, which was also livestreamed to worshippers at home. We took as our theme during our 2 months 'Sit, Walk, Stand' (Watchman Nee book title) from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. With other local preachers, we covered most of the book in this time, with a break at Christmas for special guest services.

On one Friday before Christmas, a team of 8 of us went out to do an 'Irish Pub Crawl', starting at Ma Nolan's, where we were given the stage to sing Carols and local Brits joined in. We invited people to our Carol and Christmas services.



Midweek, we hosted a Zoom Bible Study fellowship, with a follow-up of the Sunday message from Ephesians, using Tom Wright's study guide. After Christmas, we also hosted two 'Hope Explored' in a 3week study for those looking for hope and inner peace – at our church centre one morning and by Zoom one evening.

Taking a leaf out of another chaplaincy, we began to visit around the region offering a 'Coffee and Chat' or Lunch with whoever lived nearby – we managed Antibes, Grasse, Monte Carlo, Valbonne and Port Grimaud and also a lovely meal with fellow expats in Vallauris, the last home of Pablo Picasso. So, we developed some friendships, received hospitality and also engaged in some pastoral work.

Sunnybanks in Mouans-Sartoux about 15 km inland from Cannes hosted a weekly meal and charity shop for Expats and we visited twice for a meal and also took a simple communion service at the Care Home Emerada Victoria and Albert next door.

We visited the Casino twice each week – that is the local Supermarche with that name! Simon also joined a local Tennis Club du Cannes and Indoor Swimming pool at Parc Montfleury for exercise, while we both enjoyed our walks along the Croisette in Cannes and the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. Simon was also inspired by his artist daughter Emma to take up his paints again and did a few watercolour sketches. The temperature was about 5C higher than UK, but too cold for sea swimming or sunbathing!



Three couples came to visit us and stayed in the Chaplain's Studio flat for a week each. Our daughter and husband came over Christmas; **Roger & Mary Jones** from Christian Music Ministries (Birmingham) came in January and led a Worship Works seminar, as part of their visit. **Alan and Val Golton** from St. Marc's Grenoble came during our last full week. With each couple, we toured the area and did some great visits. One highlight was to visit the **Villa et Jardin Ephrussi de Rothschild** in Cap Ferrat near to Nice. An amazing

Arts & Crafts style villas and extensive gardens built and developed by Beatrice de Rothschilds in the early 20thC. We also attended two musical concerts in Holy Trinity. **Tosca** was performed on our last Saturday!

We were grateful for the opportunity to 'Winter in Cannes' and are so thankful for the warm welcome and reception from the people at Holy Trinity. We hope to see them again. **Derek and Sue Smith**, also from Bath & Wells Diocese, and with us formerly Chaplains in Cyprus, took over from us for the next two months till after Easter. *More photos and news at www.bridgeandplough.com*



Any Issues? Our next National Council meeting is on 13th July. I would be grateful to receive from members and questions or issues they would like us to discuss at this meeting. In the meantime please address any concerns to malcolm.liles48@gmail.com



The Pensions Board and Charm Rents

As you may expect there has been a significant amount of correspondence received relating to the 10.1% increase in Charm rents from April. At our meeting with the NCIs this was raised with the Pensions Board, and they have sent us a pdf document, which will be sent with this newsletter, setting out the wider context of the increase. The poorest retired clergy, those unable to own their own homes will have gained little or nothing from the 10.1% rise in their pensions when confronted with a 10.1% increase in their rent.

It is worth reflecting that some of those tenants mentioned above were told by their dioceses in the 60s-90s to sell any house they owned and contribute from that to their training costs. Widow/ers on the lowest incomes are moving into houses with no lump sum to pay for basics such as carpets, curtain tracks and curtains all of which are removed by the Pensions Board after the previous tenant.

A quote from a member, " Our rent is going up by £85 per month, the pension increase is £66 per month , pension and ESA leave £300 a month for all other bills and anything else, it seems you can't live on a clergy pension even with benefits." Increasingly there is evidence that the clergy pension is not enough to live on having been devalued over the last 20 years.

It is clear from the pdf that interest on financing accounts for more than a third of PB costs, a good deal of this borrowing is at an interest rate which rises with inflation. The result is that more than 75% of residents rents go to service debt. The significant feature is that Vote 5 is essential to cover the cost of services for 2,700 residents on sub-market rents. It is clear that to enable the PB to continue to function and to relieve tenants of ever greater rent increases will require a significant increase in Vote 5 funding from the Archbishop's Council.

So now is the time for members to begin contacting their General Synod representatives to encourage them to take a greater interest in the work of the Pensions Board, to ask questions in Synod, and to seek to increase this Vote 5 money. Over and above the current constraints facing the Pensions Board is the need to make CHARM properties net carbon zero by 2030 to comply with General Synod guidance and to obtain greater comfort for tenants living in their properties.

The Pensions Board asks that anyone worried about affording the increase would get in touch with them (incomeandrevenue@churchofengland.org). There are ways they may be able to help. *Malcolm Liles*

New Members in 2023

Alison Cooper, Geoffrey Pearson, Martin Strang, Maureen Read, Ian Brady, Clive Wood, Guy Hewlett, Jane Vost, Sheila Anthony, Karen Curnock, Graham Lewis, Martin Miller, Richard Winslade, Amanda Duncan, William Cartwright, Mark Liddell, James Mercer, Wayne Stokoe, Angela Dick, Roger Arguile, Elizabeth Snowden, Pamela McKellen, Michael Burns, Jeremy Garton, Felicity Walters, David Thomson, David Phillips, Hugh Dibbens, Simon Hobbs, Jane Warhurst, Marjorie Brown, William Moston, Simon Hill, Vaughan Roberts, Robin Figg.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Retired Clergy Association of the Church of England

**Items for the July newsletter should be with the editor, Malcolm Liles,
by the end of June at 473 City Road Sheffield S2 1GF
malcolm.liles48@gmail.com preferably in Word Calibri 12 point**

