

Spring Newsletter 2026 – focus on Chaplaincy

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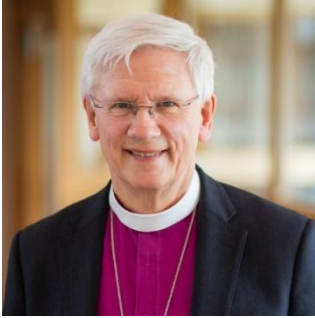


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From the Chair: The Rt Revd Colin Fletcher writes:



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Two things have been particularly on my mind as I have been thinking about what to write in this edition of the Newsletter.

The first has been the main theme of the Newsletter itself - Chaplaincy in all its rich variety of expressions. The second is the Clergy Retirement Dignity and Fairness Review which, as you'll see elsewhere, is just beginning to gather the evidence that will be so crucial to its work.

More of that in a moment but first to Chaplaincy.

One of the things I particularly enjoyed when I was serving as the Bishop of Dorchester was the access it gave to me to meet with chaplains - both those serving in the Diocese and, in some cases, those whose ministries took them much further afield. It was Bishop Richard Harries who put me in touch with Angela Harris, Baroness Harris of Richmond, when she had asked him if there might be a bishop who would take a particular interest in Police Chaplaincy. From that link came many productive conversations that were instrumental in developing the National Association of Chaplains to the Police, which has subsequently been relaunched as Police Chaplaincy UK. Central to that growth was the Revd Canon David Wilbraham MBE whose ministry had taken him from being a police motorcyclist, to parish ministry, then to Surrey Police as their Welfare Manager, specialising in the impact of trauma on Police personnel, and subsequently becoming the full time Force Chaplain with Thames Valley Police - a position he only vacated when money was found by the Police and Crime Commissioners nationally to enable him to focus on his role as the National Police Chaplain. The chaplaincy model he and his colleagues developed, whilst being ecumenical and across the faiths, was very much an Anglican one in that a chaplain was there for everyone, whatever their beliefs, and it is that that still continues today - a pattern which, as you'll see, is reflected in the experiences of many of the chaplains, and former chaplains, writing in this newsletter.

The same was true for the links that I was able to develop with the chaplains who worked in the Immigration Removal Centres (IRC) across the UK. Here there was no formal structure, except for the fact that, like prisons, each IRC had its own chaplain. What made them very different from prisons were those who lived in them. Just up the road from where I was living at the time was the Campsfield Detention Centre and this was the one I came to know best, but I also visited those close to Dover, Heathrow and Gatwick as well as the one in Scotland near Glasgow Prestwick Airport. Campsfield House had begun life as a youth detention centre but had been re-opened as an Immigration Detention Centre late in 1993. Originally it housed a population mainly of asylum seekers but subsequently it changed mainly to housing former HMP prisoners detained on immigration grounds. Each of these changes produced different challenges for chaplaincy but something that remained constant was the huge variety of religious backgrounds shared by those there and the importance of their faith to many of them. Having three spaces in an IRC where Christians, Muslims and those of other faiths (including Sikhs and Hindus) could practice their religion was always needed since they were, in essence a global community rather than a UK-based one. The chaplains in the IRC's nationally had to be very adept at finding and providing a wide variety of religious leaders to meet these varied needs not least when many detainees from a particular country would be picked up in the Home Office's hope that they would be able to be deported. I well remember the conversation I had with one chaplain when he was faced by the challenge of a significant number of Vietnamese Buddhists arriving with very little time to provide properly for them.

But onto the second thing that has been on my mind. As you will see in the article by its secretary, Kevin Norris, the Clergy Retirement Dignity and Fairness Review is now up and running and it is good that in Andrew Sentance the Archbishops' Council have found a layman who is so well qualified to chair it. My hope is that it will not fall into the trap of focussing too much on the question of the level of pensions, important as they are, and I have been assured that the committee will be able to explore such things as housing provision, rents, the level of fees for Sunday and Weekday services, provision for ill-health retirement, removal costs when leaving your final post, as well as the scandal of those who were required to sell their homes as a precondition for entering training for ordination. The latter is specifically mentioned in the Terms of Reference, and I will be writing to all those who have written to me over the past few years encouraging them to write in and to tell their own stories. In the Synod debate it was said on a number of occasions that it's important that it is the lived experience of retired clergy, their spouses and dependants that the Review hears about and the people to provide that are the members of this Association and our peers. This Review is a once in a lifetime opportunity and is one we need to seize with both hands to support our colleagues both of this generation and subsequent ones. Sadly, neither Malcolm Liles, our secretary, nor I, will be members of the Review itself, despite offering to serve in that way, but we will be formally involved in providing some commentary and oversight as its work develops. But please don't write in to us – participate in the Call for Evidence, the details of which can be found below.

Finally, as I mentioned in my last letter, this year marks the Centenary of the Pensions Board, and I look forward to representing the Association at a service of Thanksgiving for its work over the past 100 years at a service in June.

Your Friend and Brother

+Colin Fletcher

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Person in Profile.



Andrew De Smet writes: I was brought up first in Crawley, then on the Isle of Wight in a non-church going family. I came to faith in my teens, after a period of questioning, I turned up at an 8am BCP service at my local church, and despite not understanding a thing, I stayed and became an altar server. After A levels I went to Exeter University and studied Biology/Botany, got involved with the chaplaincy and started to wonder if I was called to the priesthood. Then, I worked in Microbiology for five years back on the Isle of Wight and volunteered as a Samaritan in Portsmouth. As the sense of calling remained, I went through the selection process and rather to my surprise was accepted.

I trained at Salisbury and Wells and did a year of initial psychotherapy training in Southampton. This was followed by a first curacy in a big inner-city church in Portsmouth – St Mary Portsea, and a second curacy as curate in charge of a daughter church in the same parish. During this time. I trained in spiritual direction. While at college and in Portsmouth we had four children in six years. I then became Rector of Shipston on Stour with Tidmington, Honington and Idlicote, a small town and villages in South Warwickshire, part of Coventry Diocese, I also did further counselling training in Coventry and latterly was asked to be the Diocesan counsellor alongside my parish ministry. After 7 years I moved to become warden of the Diocesan Retreat House, Offa House and kept the additional counselling/psychotherapy role. Running a retreat centre is a curious and varied mix of running a small business, welcoming guests, building improvements, finance, employees, volunteers, health and safety, planning a programme, being a bar

licensee, occasionally cooking for 30, gardening, spiritual direction leading events. After seven years I moved to be half time Vicar of Kirkdale Benefice, five churches/four parishes on the edge of the North York Moors and half time York Diocesan Pastoral Care Adviser, a role involving counselling/psychotherapy, support for those in ministry, mediations, training (including pre-retirement conferences for clergy), groups and spiritual direction. I did this for 10 years, then the diocesan role full time for 5 years including through Covid, and then 0.8 time for two years. In my 50s when my wife Janet trained as a dyslexia assessor I discovered I was dyslexic which made sense of some things I have always struggled with including church form filling!

I retired in May 2024 age 66. Retirement has been a gradual process for me, we moved into our own house in Flamborough when I finished the half time parish role in 2017, I did half my old Diocesan role for the first ten months of retirement until the Diocese appointed a successor, I let my British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Accreditation lapse in January this year. I still am involved in spiritual direction in the Diocese doing a little training and taking services some Sundays.

1. *What is the first thing you can remember?* Flying off my bicycle when the stabilisers caught on a brick wall.
2. *Who has been the greatest influence on your life?* Several people, parents, Fr George Rayner and Fr Ken Moss at Exeter University in faith development.
3. *What do you miss the most now that you are retired?* I guess will know in a year or so now that I am more retired.
4. *If you appeared on 'Mastermind' what would be your specialist subject?* Iconography. I love painting icons and looking into their background
5. *What is your favourite prayer?* The prayer of St Richard of Chichester
Thanks be to you my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, the pains and insults you have borne for me, Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother, May I know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.
6. *When have you been most content?* In the one-to-one ministry of pastoral care, counselling and spiritual accompaniment, when I can see I have made a difference also in nature, with the family.
7. *What advice would you give to a new ordinand today?* Make sure there is some space in your ministry for the things you feel called to, gifted in and give you joy. If you have a house don't sell it.
8. *What is your favourite piece of music?* Victoria's Requiem – the first time I heard it was like being in heaven.
9. *Which part of the Gospels do you appreciate the most?* Different parts at different times, but the Transfiguration is particularly meaningful for me, encounter, transformation, vision....
10. *What is concerning you at present?* What sort of a world are we passing on to future generations – global warming, environment, the rise of new dictators; the demise of the LLF process the C of E seems stuck in a perpetual loop; and more personally we are trying to move house.
11. *What do you enjoy the most about being retired?* Space, space to choose, space to give more time to family including childcare for unexpected grandchildren, space to enjoy the natural world – Flamborough is good for that, cliffs, puffins, gannets, migratory birds, passing pods of dolphins
12. *How would you like to be remembered?* I find this one hard to answer... with affection.

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Clergy Retirement Dignity and Fairness Review – Update

Many readers will know that, following a request from General Synod in July 2025, in parallel to the planned improvements to clergy pensions (for pensionable service after 2011), the Archbishops' Council has commissioned an independently chaired review “of what is needed to ensure that clergy and their dependents are supported in retirement with dignity and fairness”¹. The Review is now underway and will shortly launch a Call for Evidence to gather insights from those with experience of clergy retirement.

Aims

The Review's purpose is to take an honest and comprehensive look at what clergy and their households need in order to experience a dignified, fair and financially secure retirement, and to examine how well current arrangements meet those needs. This includes consideration of pensions, retirement housing, support in the transition into retirement, and the wider financial and pastoral context in which clergy prepare for this major life change.

The Terms of Reference set a broad scope and are available [here \(gs-misc-1445-clergy-retirement-dignity-fairness-review.pdf\)](#) as part of the February 2025 Synod papers. Among other areas, the Review will examine the adequacy of current pension arrangements, identify and cost proposals that could offer the greatest improvements, and consider whether particular groups of clergy are disproportionately disadvantaged or under-provided for. The Review will also be informed by theological reflection.

The Review Group is chaired by Dr Andrew Sentance, and draws from clergy at different stages of life, along with lay members, economic and pensions experts.

Hearing views and seeking evidence

In addition to work underway to consider the wider pensions landscape within charitable and faith-based sectors, affordability benchmarks and theological exploration, the Review will shortly release a Call for Evidence.

This Call for Evidence is intended to bring in a range of perspectives on the key questions in the Terms of Reference including helping to illuminate what has worked well in preparing for and supporting clergy in retirement, what continues to pose challenges, and where costed changes would make the most significant difference.

Contributions will be welcomed from organisations, associations and networks connected with the Church, including those who represent retired clergy, as well as from individuals who wish to reflect on broad themes (although the Review won't intervene in individual concerns or situations).

In addition to the Call for Evidence, the Review Group will be supported in its work by regular engagement with a Stakeholder Consultation forum which will meet at key points during the process. Membership includes representatives of the Retired Clergy Association, clergy living in retirement housing, the Church of England Clergy & Employee Advocates (CEECA), and the Clergy Pension Action Group.

Next steps

The Call for Evidence will be published shortly on the Church of England website (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/governance/national-church-institutions/archbishops-council/clergy-retirement-dignity-and-fairness-review>) and will take the form of an online questionnaire.

¹ From the original Synod motion in GS 2406.

Submissions will be welcomed from groups and networks representing retired clergy, as well as individuals, Dioceses and others.

If you are one of those who get a hard copy of this newsletter by post, and do not have access to electronic means to respond to the Review, please write to me personally - Kevin Norris, Church House Westminster, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3AZ.

A progress report will be presented to the General Synod in July 2026, with the final report due in February 2027. We will post updates on progress on the webpage as the review progresses, and we look forward to continuing to engage with the RCA during the course of the review.

Kevin Norris

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News from the Secretary

Dignity and Fairness Review Group

Hopefully, you will have read the article in this newsletter from Kevin Norris, secretary of the Dignity and Fairness Review Group.

Since September 2025 we at the RCA been striving to know what the Dignity and Fairness Review Group would be looking at, in February 2026 GS Misc1445 this was revealed in the terms of reference, which looked very light on content about housing and especially Charm property and their tenants.

We still have no information about the complete makeup of the group, except for the name of its Chair, Andrew Sentence. How then can the retired clergy and their partners have confidence in the Group's deliberations, for example will there be someone on the group who has experience of living in a Charm property, or of retirement, or retirement living?

According to the timetable attached to GS Misc 1445 the group should have issued a call for evidence in March. However, we now know that the make-up of the Review group has been confirmed and they are having their first meeting this week. That is where the issues we have been highlighting around retirement, pensions, housing etc will be discussed over the coming months. Please pray for the group. Pray especially for the review group and those who will be answering the call for evidence.

There is also a separate Stakeholder group which will be involved in consultations with the Review Group, our Chairman, Colin Fletcher is a member of this stakeholder group along with myself.

We would welcome receiving issues and concerns and details on those issues which we could feed into the main Review Group. Malcolm Liles, malcolm.liles48@gmail.com 473 City Road, Sheffield S2 1GF

Annual General Meetings

We have been trying to find venues for these meetings despite poor responses and attendance last year, however it looks likely that the 2025 AGM will have to be held by zoom at some time in the autumn unless a suitable venue is found. Further information about this will be in the July newsletter.

New Members

Edward Hurst, York diocese; Jim Bennett, Rochester diocese; Lynette Leithead, Rochester diocese; Wendy Oliver, Liverpool diocese; Antony Rich, St.Edmundsbury and Ipswich diocese; Phillip Garbett, St.Edmundsbury and Ipswich diocese; Richard Worssam, Rochester diocese; Andrea Leonard, Rochester diocese; Patrick Davies, Manchester diocese; David Jacks, Europe diocese; Andrew Goodman, St. Albans diocese; Elizabeth Goodall, Lichfield diocese; Alan Green, Chichester diocese; Simon Evans, Salisbury diocese; Joy Cousans, Leeds diocese; Paul Clarke, St.Edmundsbury and Ipswich diocese; Christopher Thorpe, Hereford diocese; Manette Crossman, St.Edmundsbury and Ipswich diocese; Ian Enticott, Chester diocese; Alan Hughes, Newcastle diocese; Elizabeth Shearcroft, Exeter diocese; Michael Warren, Oxford diocese; Susan Taylor, Rochester diocese; Robb Wainwright, Leeds diocese; Robin Lodge, Bath and Wells diocese; Merrin Playle, Chelmsford diocese; Timothy Weatherstone, Norwich diocese; Andrew Wilson, Oxford diocese.

Malcolm Liles

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INTRODUCING SAINT BONAVENTURE

I was prompted to discover St Bonaventure, who was born in Bagnoregio near Orvieto, by the theology of Cardinal Ratzinger, the late Pope Benedict XVI, whose visit to England and sermons made a deep impression on me. Like so many people in England, both Catholics and Anglicans, I knew little about Bonaventure, associating him with Aquinas and scholastic theology in the thirteenth century. Encountering Bonaventure has been a transforming experience during the fourth decade of my ministry as an Anglican priest.

Bonaventure lived in the thirteenth century and died in 1274 while attending the Second Council of Lyons as a cardinal bishop. The medieval core of his birthplace, Bagnoregio near Orvieto, remains perched on a pinnacle of land left intact after an earthquake. He was educated at the University of Paris where he became a Franciscan and taught theology. In 1257, he was elected as Minister General of the Franciscans, which was a full-time occupation as he trekked the length and breadth of Europe on foot. He continued to write, and also to teach in Paris, where he played a leading role in defending the traditional Augustinian approach to Christian theology and challenging the pretensions of philosophy derived from the thought of Aristotle.

After his death, the memory of Bonaventure was partially occluded by the rise of Thomism in the Catholic Church and by the repudiation of scholastic theology by many of the Reformers during the Reformation. The rediscovery of the distinctive ethos of Bonaventure's theology in the twentieth century has had a considerable influence on leading Catholic theologians like Guardini, von Balthasar, and Ratzinger in the years leading up to and since Vatican II. One of the most enriching aspects to the study of Bonaventure has been to read remarkable studies of him from across Europe and America and making new friends who understand and value the unique significance of his spiritual theology.

Why is Bonaventure so important? Primarily because he is the most Christ-centred theologian. For him Christ and his death on the Cross is the key to understanding reality, human nature, and the whole purpose of God. His theology is steeped in the Bible, and it was considerably influenced by the thinking of Anselm, with whom he had an obvious intellectual and spiritual affinity. Bonaventure was a true disciple of Augustine; but he was also a creative interpreter of his thought, applying it to the novel situation in which he lived and taught in Paris and elsewhere. Bonaventure's thought is profoundly marked by the memory of St Francis and also of St Clare, and his *Life of St Francis* was commissioned as the definitive life of the saint. The last book for

which he was responsible, called *Collations on the Hexaëmeron* or *Illuminations of the Church*, is comparable in its depth and scope to Augustine's *City of God*.

The Franciscans in America have done a great work by translating and publishing most of Bonaventure's writings in English, and it was his *Commentary on St Luke's Gospel* that was my own starting point. I taught this gospel for many years to my pupils as Chaplain of Marlborough College, and it was fascinating and enriching to work through the detailed and extensive commentary that Bonaventure wrote to assist the Franciscans in their preaching. Central to his commentary is his very full discussion of the meaning of the Transfiguration. I wrote a book distilling the key themes of Bonaventure's approach to this well-known and well-loved gospel, which led me on to writing an introductory guide to his spiritual theology, as well as another book examining his last major work, the *Collations on the Hexaëmeron* in some detail. These books are now being published in Korean for the growing life of the Church in South Korea.

One theme that emerges clearly throughout Bonaventure's writings is the Christian vocation to *deification* – being made like Christ in his life and in his death, here and hereafter, and this is the subject of my fourth study of his spiritual theology. In the light of the stigmata of St Francis, Bonaventure perceived that *deiformity*, as he called it in Latin, means *cruciformity*: even as St Paul said, 'I have been crucified with Christ.' All Bonaventure's spiritual writings and his many sermons are designed to enable Christians to follow the narrow and afflicted path of the Cross, trodden by Francis and Clare, that alone leads to eternal life. He is one of the wisest and most humane of spiritual fathers, a great communicator and pastor, endowed with a very positive vision of what human beings can become when their lives are filled and transformed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

This is an excerpt from my recent memoir called 'Communion and Contemplation: Reflections on Friendship, Ministry, and Prayer' that is now published by the Sacristy Press in Durham. My four studies of the spiritual theology of St Bonaventure are published by James Clarke & Co., Cambridge.

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From the Editor



Thank you to the many people who have kindly written about chaplaincy for this edition, and I hope we will enjoy their reflections and reminiscences. I have been inundated by wonderful accounts of chaplaincy and so I will be running this theme over this newsletter and the summer one.

I am most grateful to Harry Mount, Editor of *The Oldie Magazine*, for his kind permission to reproduce an article by Hunter Davies, who I am sure many of us will have come across through his books, journalism and broadcasting. His works strike me as a useful guide for our more mature years. Perhaps you have some thoughts or ideas or indeed experiences that you would like to share with our readership.

As always, articles are most welcome. If you feel you have a comment or an observation on anything you have read in this newsletter, do please write to me.

Items from members for the Spring newsletter should be with me please by Friday 10th July at cjpcad9@aol.com preferably in Word, Calibri 12-point narrow margin. Thank you.

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

Charles Chadwick

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The Commandment of the New Covenant

Every time I have the privilege of presiding at a Holy Communion service, I find myself pausing after reading Jesus' summary of the Law as taken from Matthew 22:37-40. I note that Jesus says, *all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*

These two summarise what has come so far out of the original Covenant. I've wondered for some time why we don't include at this point, the New Commandment Jesus added, from John 13:34-35, that we are to, *Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

I feel this New Commandment is bound up with but distinctive from the first two commandments and speaks into our role as Jesus' community of the Spirit to be making the Kingdom of God and the inherent Trinitarian love of God dynamically visible in how we live.

Jesus lived in community with a group of disciples including the 12. The evidence from the Gospels is that their journeying together wasn't always smooth and easy but robust and lively where characters were celebrated and moulded under Jesus' wisdom and love. It must have been formative as a model for how the Apostles shaped the nascent church.

Particularly with the variety of arguments and divisions within the Church at the moment I wonder whether we've been missing the value and importance of this third Commandment alongside the other two? I found myself reminded of a poem I wrote several years ago.

Speaking in Love?

If you would speak the truth to me
Please let it be through tears.
Not with an edge of harsh delight
That justifies how you are right,
But with a heart that deeply knows
Your words will hurt whom I hold dear.

If you would speak the truth to me
Please let it be through tears.
Not standing tall and so correct
Too far to hear or to connect,
But arm-in-arm in my swamp of doubt
Alert to my silences and fears.

If you would speak the truth to me
Please let it be through tears.
Not from a box where you hold the key
Preserved for all eternity,
But pulling on the desperate ends
Of frayed desire that will not mend,
And realities that won't be friends;

Yet hoping misted glass will clear.

3rd July 2018

Ordained in 1995, Nick Grew served in the dioceses of Lichfield, Guildford and St Albans before retiring in 2020.

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Mustn't grumble

At 90, *Hunter Davies* is **not** a grumpy old man,

thanks to his work, curiosity – and younger girlfriend

I turned 90 on 7th January. Ninety! I can hardly believe it myself. Here are my tips on how to become a grumpy old man

Start young

By not being a grumpy young git. Otherwise, you will be set in your grumpy ways. So go around saying: it's brilliant being young; houses so cheap; so much work; fab music; lovely clothes; everyone loves me. It may be rubbish, but soon you will believe it. Everyone loves a cheerful chappie. I was always cheerful, smiling and whistling in all difficulties, as Robert Baden-Powell told us scouts to be. Freezing council house, wartime and an invalid father ... but did I complain? Did I heckers! It seemed normal. Come on, let's go and play marbles in the gutter.

Don't say it was better in the old days

Hard to avoid it when you get old, lumbered with all those memories – most of them fake. But it's pretty pointless. We are not going back to those days, are we? So onwards and upwards. It wasn't better in the olden days – just different. Enjoy now.

Keep trying

If at first you don't succeed, blah, blah, blah ... But it works. Rejection is only temporary, if you quickly move on. For the last six months, I failed to get a book accepted. I kept bashing away. Then I got two commissions on the same day. Bingo!

Don't blame others

I was looking for excuses, and I just thought the publishers were being stupid. And their time would come. They would be old and out of work one day, oh yes. I now refuse to accept the publishing world was being ageist. My earlier idea just wasn't good enough.

Don't think you know more than the young

Don't say to children, "This is what to do. This is how to do it" – even if they are playing with a chainsaw. They will learn. The young don't want you showing off or being bossy.

On no account tell the young about your ailments

Keep your heart bypass to yourself – and your arthritis, your poorly legs and definitely your constipation. The young don't want to hear about it. You're old – what else do you expect, you old git? Talk about your health only with people your age. How many pills do you take each day? Is that all? I cart mine round in a trolley. There is an exception for dramatic conditions. When I had my heart bypass, my grandchildren were

fascinated when I pulled up my shirt to reveal the scars. But don't talk about the pain. Just show off the ghoulish effects. Say they were war wounds.

Ask questions

Always ask about the other person – their name, what they do. Have you come far? Why do you think the late Queen was so loved? She never talked about herself.

When I was a little boy, my mother told me, 'I used to go to the front gate, stop total strangers, tell them my name, and ask where they were going'. I haven't stopped asking questions since.

Say yes to life

Act on a whim, accept all offers, always go through no-through roads, ignore no-access signs, don't use pedestrian crossings, live in the moment.

Last year, aged 89, I bought an 1898 Dutch barge on the Isle of Wight. Totally stupid. I have to clamber up narrow, outside metal steps to get to the wonderful wheelhouse. But, goodness, what views when I get there.

I know, don't say it. I won't have many years aboard. But what fun!

It's all an experience

Losing my wife, writer Margaret Forster (1938-2016), ten years ago was of course awful. But, gradually, I have tried to adjust. Trillions on this planet have suddenly become widowed and single. It is a human condition. Grasp it. See it as an experience.

Keep working

Even if it's voluntary work, you must get up and out. Do things, meet people and never have an empty unproductive day. Otherwise, you won't deserve a drink at the end of it.

Don't envy others

Just envy yourself. Say, 'Haven't I done well? I'm still alive, still got my body, family and friends, house, walks, work, tortoise and footer on the telly. And, look, it's almost six o'clock, time for a snorter ...

Lots of drink

It is so vital to treat yourself, celebrate getting something done or just surviving this day, instead of sitting around moaning. No one wants a moaning minnie, I celebrate getting through each day with a bottle of wine. Never a litre. I do have rules.

Lots of rules

Since 1986, when I was 50 and we went to the West Indies for the first time, I've had a daily siesta.

Every day, wherever I am, I get into bed. One hour usually. Then I jump up. Greet the brand-new day. Sorry – brand-new afternoon ...

And find a young companion

That does help. She is a babe, 80 in April. An oldie and goldie.

Hunter Davies's Get Back: John, Paul, George, Ringo and Me is out later this year

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CHAPLAINCY REFLECTIONS

School Chaplaincy

As a teenager, pondering the possibility of ordained ministry for a future career, I became interested in the '60s stories worker-priests in France, dividing their time between working in factories and ministering to their congregations.

In addition, along I think with many teenagers, unsure of what to take on as a career, I thought the answer might be in Teaching. So, as they say, it thus came to pass, and with my chemistry degree from the University of Queensland and a DipEd from Sydney University, I became a science teacher.

About five years down that line, and a missionary-teacher in the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, the idea of ordination arose again. I sought the advice of my Bishop, and his plan was for me to travel to the UK, study, get ordained and return to the Pacific as school chaplain in addition to science teacher.

In Cambridge, in 1977, those plans went awry when the British government gave independence to the Solomons, and it became appropriate that the chaplaincy, planned for me, would instead go to a Solomon Islander.

So there I was at the end of the summer term with nowhere to go, and in one of those breath-taking acts of God, a letter to the principal of my college arrived seeking an assistant chaplain for a school in Oxford. I was accepted, and for 28 years I was one of two Chaplains at St Edward's School in Oxford.

Along with the chaplaincy in those twenty-eight years, I taught chemistry and physics and A-level religious studies, coached rugby and squash, was a housemaster for 12 years and, for a time, head of department. It was an all-consuming lifestyle in term-time, and when I now look back, the word 'exhilarating' is forefront to mind.

Only God will know whether or not the Kingdom was advanced during those years in that small part of north Oxford, but one thing I most certainly do know is this: It was the daily service of Holy Communion, with usually only the two chaplains present, which sustained and enabled me through those twenty-eight years and was particularly the most crucially important for me and for my work. Did it worry me that neither the pupils nor the teachers ever attended? What, it seemed to me, concerning our daily mornings in Chapel, was that whenever some sort of crisis occurred in the school community, on that morning the chapel would be packed for that early Eucharist. They knew that each day prayers were said for them and their families and the school community, and like traditional Anglicans, they knew that they didn't need to be there, until, that is, until a crisis occurred and then they knew what had to be done and where they wanted to be – in Chapel.

A Point to Note: From time to time, some clergy who may have become worn-out by the ongoing demands of parochial ministry, are tempted to think that life as a school chaplain might be, as they say, a bit of a doddle, with all those marvellous school holidays. Nothing could be further from the truth. Teaching a full-time school timetable, along with all the additional chaplaincy needs and activities, and, added to that, the many various day-to-day tasks that teachers must do outside the classroom, not least marking and preparing lessons, makes for a very, very busy life indeed.

Ordained in 1978, in addition to school chaplaincy, David Wippell exercised his priestly ministry in a large rural multi-parish benefice in Oxfordshire.

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Healthcare Chaplaincy

When I was ordained deacon in Coventry Cathedral in 1991, I had no idea that I would spend over 30 years being a healthcare chaplain. I had at this stage had 2 major back surgeries and then went on to have 2 more whilst serving my title so hospitals were not unknown to me. Towards the end of my curacy and knowing that I would be ordained priest in April 1994 I began to think about what next and in my thoughts and prayers I began to explore hospital chaplaincy. This culminated in me moving back to my home city of Plymouth three weeks after my ordination as a priest where I took up the post of assistant chaplain in the Plymouth Hospital, then Lead Chaplain at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, chaplain at the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, followed by Lead Chaplain at Epsom and St. Helier hospitals and finally Lead Chaplain in Oxford University Hospitals in 2018 until I retired in January 2025. Some people told me when I started this ministry that I wouldn't be very busy as most people in our modern world would not feel it necessary to talk to a chaplain whilst they were in hospital. Nothing turned out to be further from the truth. In my time as a chaplain the need that people have expressed to talk to a chaplain has actually got more and more. This is true for patients, families and staff. Some people think that chaplains just visit patients in the hospital\hospice, having cups of tea and praying with elderly church goers. The truth is that I spent far more of my time with people who did not go to church and who couldn't say what they did or did not believe but that they needed to talk about things that they had never talked about before in terms of life and death, fear and joy, love and frustration and simply to have someone who will listen and not judge their situations and life histories. I have been with many women who have suffered the death of a baby, listened to those who have attempted suicide, been with families as they turned off life support machines. I was once asked by an ordinand what it was like to no longer be doing any evangelism anymore and I was somewhat frustrated and told them that it depended what they meant by evangelism. Whilst my role was never to try and convert anyone – I would have lost my job if I had done, nobody was in any doubt that I was a Christian chaplain and by showing love, care and compassion and sometimes prayer, anointing, end of life prayer I believe that this was what God called me to do. Healthcare chaplaincy has been a passion for the 30 years and has been a huge privilege to be with people at sometimes their most vulnerable and frightening time. The fact that people have shared those moments with me makes me feel very honoured. In the current situation in the NHS my worry is that chaplaincy can be seen, by some, to be an easy target for saving money and doing that would make the NHS a much poorer place where only the body and possibly the mind were deemed to be worth treating.

Sarah Sewell

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Prison Chaplaincy

I was a chaplain to two prisons for nineteen years, and I have just retired. One of the prisons is a high security Category B prison with just over 200 male prisoners; the other is a Category D prison, an 'open prison' with no walls or wire, with 320 men. The prisons, which have a very different ethos are next to each other and the staff work in both. The chaplains in the prisons represent all the main religions.

Prison chaplaincy is there to provide spiritual, emotional and pastoral care to prisoners and staff, and to enable prisoners of all faiths to practice their religion and to celebrate their festivals. Chaplains are

employed to be present for prisoners of all faiths and none. We play our part in the rehabilitation process and endeavour to put men in touch with worshipping communities in the area they are going to settle after they leave prison. When a prisoner suffers a bereavement chaplains may have to inform the prisoner, and chaplains are very much involved in the process of enabling prisoners to attend funerals where this is possible. Chaplains are involved in projects to support prisoners and their families. For example, together with a group called Prison Fellowship, Christmas presents are sent to the children of prisoners. Chaplains meet each prisoner when they arrive, and a chaplain will meet each before they leave to wish them well and also to enquire if they have a job to go to, and accommodation.

The prisoners relate to chaplains in a rather different way to the way they relate to other members of staff. Sometimes the men take the opportunity to ridicule religion. I have lost count of the number of times I have heard shouted: 'More tea vicar!' Chaplains are often used as ones to vent anger and frustration about the situation the prisoners have got themselves into. At other times prisoners chat to chaplains to pass the time and as a result good relationships are built; at other times deeper conversations take place.

However, for a lot of the time chaplains are simply ignored. I think that chaplains symbolise something for many of the men, often at a deep level, around faith and hope, and also meaning and guilt, an area they mostly find difficult to articulate. If nothing else prison gives them time to think and reflect about such things. For those who want to practise their faith there is a space which is set apart where that faith can be focused and developed. For the Christians there is a chapel providing rituals and services that speak of something beyond themselves and their present situation, giving much needed hope, while for some a relief from boredom.

One important role the chaplain has is to respond to requests to light a candle in the chapel on special occasions. This could be at the times when family funerals are taking place, or on important anniversaries of bereavements, or on the anniversary of the deaths of their victim. Here the chaplain and the prisoner go to the chapel, a candle is lit and prayers said followed by silence. The simplest of rituals these tend to be intensely and profoundly moving.

Ben Whitaker was ordained in 1987 and in addition to prison chaplaincy served as a chaplain to the deaf.

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Experience of Chaplaincy

I was a student at the University of Liverpool in the late 1970s. There was a large UCCF Christian Union. I attended many of their gatherings and made some good friends.

I had converted at the age of seventeen, my first church being an independent house church affiliated to the Federation of Independent Evangelical Churches. So the Christian Union should have been my natural affiliation. But instead, I found a home with the Anglican Chaplaincy under the young chaplain Revd. John Walker. He was part of the ministry team at St. Matthew and St. James Mossley Hill, where many of the university halls were sited. There was a wonderful informality about the set-up, undergirded by strong Bible-teaching. We worshipped at the mother church on Sunday mornings, and there was a student meeting in the church hall every termtime Sunday evening. There was a chaplaincy meeting room on campus; it was so nice to have a base to work from, and there was a very well-attended midweek communion every Wednesday.

The chaplaincy encouraged involvement in the arts; it had a sacred dance group, a drama group, several music groups, and opportunity for those interested in poetry and visual art to be involved too. We were encouraged to share in leading and worship. We received invitations to visit churches all over Liverpool

diocese. We took part in church services, we performed at hospitals, youth clubs, and other groups (such as a stroke club.)

Looking back, my experience was positive and encouraging. It was a time to experiment and explore. As a new convert, the chaplaincy ministry provided me with a solid basis to my faith.

My time with the Anglican Chaplaincy has influenced my whole life. On leaving University I earned my living as a musician. A quarter of a century later I was ordained in to the Anglican ministry. John Walker's wise and gentle leadership had provided my entrance point into the Church of England.

Ordained in 20027, Marc Catley served as vicar of St. Giles Packwood and St. Thomas Hockley Heath in the Diocese of Birmingham.

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Chaplaincy: Who pays? And what's the cost?

A tentative phone call from someone I met at a deanery synod meeting. 'Are Readers licensed to conduct baptisms?'

'On the whole, no,' I said. 'May I ask why you're enquiring?'

It turned out that Mike*, one of our Readers, was conducting an extensive ministry in another parish. There, fondly known as the Bishop of Bettleigh, he was regularly officiating at baptisms, funerals, and the Eucharist (with reserved sacrament). Following an uncomfortable conversation, he and I agreed that I'd 'let him go' for a while, and that he was welcome to apply through the appropriate channels for a licence to minister (as a Reader!) in Bettleigh.

Mike never came round to the view that he'd in any way been at fault. 25 years later, I've a lot of sympathy. Stung at the time by the affront to my dignity, I failed to recognise that Mike was acting honourably. (If not entirely in accordance with the regulations of church order.)

The Rector of Bettleigh, whose stall Mike had taken to keeping warm, was his brother-in-law, Steve. When Steve was firing on all cylinders, he was a riot of energy. Within months of his induction, he'd set up chaplaincies at a second division football club, a local factory, and the county constabulary. He'd re-opened a remote church his predecessor had over fifteen painstaking years guided into closure.

When Steve didn't fire on all cylinders, he didn't fire at all. Plunged into gloom and inertia, he closed the Rectory curtains and left things to Mike. Mike did his best not only to keep the place running, but also to conceal Steve's depressions. (One thing that can be said for a plurality of chaplaincies is that you can rely on people to assume you're somewhere else.)

Steve never embraced the notion that chaplaincy is as well practised with caution as with enthusiasm. One of the first things you learn is that people expect things of you. They expect you to make palpable, professional contributions to The Team endeavour (whatever their game).

Such expectation runs counter to one of the gentle truths of parish ministry (at any rate, during a period of church decline), namely that all that's really expected of you is that you'll be a bit of a prat. Hopefully an affable one.

Like many other parish clergy, I was prat enough to say Yes to organisations that were movingly (flatteringly?) desperate to acquire a chaplain. And so it was that I undertook the role for the local Royal British Legion and Air Training Corps - both of them fundamentally at odds with my fluffy, wannabe pacifism and my aversion to uniforms. Clergy have a dreadful genius for getting themselves into situations where they are more or less permanently committing multiple betrayals. We can only trust that however out of place we feel – the jigsaw piece from another puzzle – Homer Simpson in Bourton-on-the-Water – God somehow fits us in.

In parish ministry, just as incumbency doesn't feel like work, so the stipend doesn't seem like a remuneration. (Inconveniently for us, levels of giving suggest that this is a feeling widely shared by churchgoers.) But in 2014, I began a full-time chaplaincy as Preacher of the Charterhouse, and found myself completing forms for finance and HR. It became clear that I was being paid a salary, and that – however congenial – I had a job. Someone somewhere would be keeping an eye on what I did and what I cost.

If a chaplaincy post has a cost, who pays? Well, in my case, the multi-million pound endowment of Thomas Sutton, a 17th century philanthropist. In Steve's case, in Bettleigh? Certainly his brother-in-law. Perhaps other members of the family. And maybe the very bodies he'd intended to support. Probably the parish. And, of course, Steve himself.

I'm led, unwillingly, to ask of my whole time in ministry, What was the cost? Who paid? And I reflect that the ones who pay and the ones who bear the cost are two different sets of people.

At Theological College, we used occasionally to remind ourselves of the little Orwellian lady dismounting her bike outside a Barbara Pym church, dropping coins into the collection so that we ordinands could read for our Oxford diplomas, play cricket on a summer afternoon, stroll down to The Bat and Ball for a pint. Hearing those coins clink on the imagined offertory plate, we thought, No tea-time treat for Tiddles today; no tonic at twilight for Auntie this evening. Oh well. 'Same again, Landlord, please.'

From Cuddesdon we dispersed to mainly cozy curacies in the leafier parishes of the Province of Canterbury. After that (some of us immediately and others eventually) we sold our expensively acquired services to university colleges, to Her Majesty's armed forces, to boarding schools, NHS Trusts – and to the trustees of ancient charities. (I knew a chap, the captain of the diocesan golf team, who went directly from his curacy to be Chaplain to the Duke of Portland.)

According to Wikipedia etymology, the word 'chaplain' derives from an act of St Martin of Tours, who during a snowstorm divided his *cappellanu* (his cloak) and gave half of it to a beggar. I look at my beloved Loden overcoat. Which half? I wonder. We could split it down the middle and warm one flank each. Or we could part it at the waist, leaving one of us with a kind of jerkin and the other with a kilt. Either way, there'd be little dignity in it for either of us.

Perhaps dignity is close to the heart of the cost of chaplaincy, of any ministry. I'm not thinking of the vicar-in-the-stocks splattered by wet sponges at the summer fête, an Ed Davey kind of clergymen. I'm thinking about that inflated conceit which is my own treasured moral view of myself. Only when that's under the cosh have I ever completed a gesture that might have belonged to the Kingdom. Wounded gravitas is good Christian ground, it seems to me. I don't know what Martin of Tours looked like in half a cloak. But I do have some idea of what the church looks like with its trousers down. And perhaps that's not as bad a position to be in as we might have thought. To me, a church that seeks forgiveness is much more becoming than one that claims to dispense it.

**Some of the names in this piece have been altered*

Robin Isherwood, Frome

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Book Review: The Spiritual Adventure of Henri Matisse:

Vence's Chapel of the Rosary by Charles Miller

Published by Unicorn Publishing, and available from Waterstones, Amazon and other booksellers.



Over the centuries many artists have offered their skills, experience and expertise for the glory of God and the benefit of the church. One might think of Botticelli's *The Baptism of Christ* or, more recently John Piper's stained-glass windows in Coventry Cathedral's Baptistery, All Saints' Church Clifton, Bristol, Eton College Chapel, and Saint Margaret's Church Westminster.

This fascinating, lavishly produced, and thoughtfully written book is a delightful exploration of the final great work of Henri Matisse (1869-1954), and his relationships with God, the Dominican Order and those he worked with closely in his work, that led to Vence having a Chapel of The Rosary after the Second World War. Beautifully illustrated it enables the reader to learn of Henri Matisse's journey as a Christian pilgrim, not least his being inspired by Thomas a Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*.

Along with Pablo Picasso, Matisse is regarded by many as one of Europe's pre-eminent painters of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More information on Matisse and his influences and work, can be found at websites including <https://www.henrimatisse.org/>.

The book draws one's attention to the spiritual dimension of modern and its ability to inspire not only those who experience it but those who create it. In 1951, Matisse wrote to a bishop, "I began with the profane, and now in the evening of life, in a wholly natural way, I am with the divine". As Charles Miller reveals, in working alongside the Dominican Order in Vence Matisse found himself becoming more deeply engaged with the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Given the final work, with its extraordinarily effective use of space, light, and colour, that seems to draw one from the finite towards the infinite, it may be too simple to describe the chapel as merely a small, simple whitewashed country chapel, but it is worthwhile noting the importance of their being clarity about the building's role and purpose, "namely as 'the house of gathered fellowship' ... in which the eucharistic community gathers as the Body of Christ to express its praise, and above all, to offer the sacrifice of the Mass" (pp 83-84).



This book would make an excellent gift for someone being ordained or for marking a significant anniversary of their priesthood. I can thoroughly recommend it.

Ordained in America in 1982, Charles Miller is an Anglican priest who has taught theology, Anglican studies and spirituality in seminaries and universities in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as being a parish priest. Prior to this retirement in 2024, he was the incumbent of the parish of Abingdon-on-Thames in Oxfordshire. His books include Toward A Fuller Vision: Orthodoxy and the Anglican Experience and Praying the Eucharist: Reflections on the Eucharistic Experience of God.

Charles Chadwick

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The Heavenly City

O My God, bring me, even now, to the mansions
 which thy Son prepareth for them that love thee.
 Every day make me to dwell in the eternal and live unto thee.

Let me walk in that heavenly city of which the Lamb is the light:
 Let me serve as in the courts where the Lamb reigneth:
 Let me follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth:
 And fear not, cease not, to battle for right
 After the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let my conversation be in heaven with thy blessed and beloved,
 The whole company of the redeemed; and with hierarchies of angels,
 Praising, wroshipping, and adoring him
 That sitteth upon the throne for ever and ever.

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