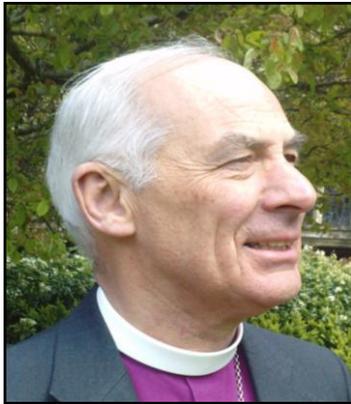




Summer Newsletter 2013

*Retired
Clergy
Association*



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

By the time you receive this newsletter, our two 'annual' meetings will have taken

place - at Salisbury Cathedral on June 6th and at Bishopthorpe on June 26th.

These are two important occasions when we meet together for the Eucharist, share some lunch, hear about the work of the RCA over the last twelve months and listen to what members would like to see the Association doing in the future. If you were not able to come this year, please look out for the dates for 2014.

A number of things have been on the Council's agenda during 2012-13. It is good to report that our finances are stable and that most of the Diocesan Bishops pay the life subscription for clergy at the point of their retirement. Thanks to the persistent hard work of our Vice Chair, Owen Barraclough, we now have a new Constitution which, once approved by the Charity Commission, will give us charitable status.

As I have indicated to you in my previous letters, we have had two meetings with the Secretary to the Pensions Board and other officials on the issue of housing. This is proving to be an excellent dialogue and on May 3rd Owen Barraclough, David Phipers and myself had the opportunity of seeing and

commenting on the emerging proposals for the changes in the rental arm of CHARM. The Board will publish these proposals in July and there will be opportunity for the RCA Council along with everyone else to comment on the proposals. Please do take the opportunity to do so.

Earlier in the year, Owen, David and I met with those from the Archbishops' Council who were working on the Funerals project, to hear our comments on the questionnaire they were putting together. Again, it was encouraging to be asked for our input, so that the voice of the retired clergy could be heard. I do hope that you responded to this document. We report on the results of this questionnaire later in this Letter.

The Annual Meetings also gave me the opportunity to thank our President, Bishop Michael, members of the Council and, in particular, David our Secretary for his huge contribution to the life of the Association.

It is dangerous to say that 'Summer is with us'!! But it is the time when serving clergy take their holidays. This gives us the extended opportunity to help them to have a break. What a joy and privilege it is to be able to lead people in the worship of GOD, and to proclaim the truths of the Gospel. May each of us do so in such a way that people are enabled to know something of His love and His grace in their lives, as we do in ours.

We have no abiding city . . . Hebrews 13.14

Oliver Simon

The Archbishop of the Province Indian Ocean responded with characteristic enthusiasm to the idea that I might be of some use when I 'retired' in 2010. Having first visited the Province some 25 years previously I had got to know parts of it well; I had been to Antsiranana in northern Madagascar several times. It was in Madagascar that I felt the need to be greatest, but Archbishop Ian thought otherwise and I served an 'apprenticeship' in Mauritius in 2011, assisting him not least in reflecting on some of the intractable issues which many of our Anglican Provinces have to face – how to heal relationships, address resource problems and the like.



The diocese of Antsiranana was beset with internal strife and poor leadership; my predecessor had had a stroke in his 50s; his predecessor had died aged 64. It was agreed that someone was needed to help the healing process which had already started and set in motion arrangements for electing the next bishop. The need was for a bishop rather than an ecclesiastical administrator. "And why not you?" Archbishop

Ian asked as we sat in the transit lounge of the airport? I recalled the criticisms of Archbishop Donald Coggan's age when he became Archbishop of Canterbury – simply a 'caretaker'. Precisely: to take care of the People of God in the diocese of Antsiranana for the period which the church there, and God, desires. Why not?

As I travel around a diocese which is the size of England, with poor communications in spite of the arrival of mobile phones, and generally speaking very bad roads which get pretty impassable in the wet season, I look at the wonderful scenery and I say to myself, "What a privilege to be invited to serve the people of God here!" I am thankful for good health and reasonable but not unlimited stamina – the hot weather is very enervating. I find my confidence in a God who provides has grown in contexts which are unpredictable and challenging – we live in a part of the world where the infrastructure of society is fragile, even dangerous. And I thank God for the prayers and material support of people back home as well as for my Church of England pension which sustains my needs. How our God truly prepares places for us to flourish – for some of us it just takes time to arrive!

For many years that phrase from Hebrews 13.14 has been a kind of mantra which has given an impetus to my ministry. In such ways Scripture dialectically informs and fashions our practice.

The Rt Revd Dr Oliver Simon is bishop of Antsiranana in northern Madagascar

Write to him at oliversimon@dunelm.org.uk

A Summer's Day in Salisbury



Twenty-five members of the Association gathered on a glorious summer's day on 6 June in Salisbury Cathedral for the Southern Province General Meeting. The Cathedral Restaurant proved an excellent meeting-point for coffee before we moved to the Trinity Chapel to celebrate the Eucharist. Bishop Michael presided as we were joined by regular members of the Cathedral and other visitors.

Speaking from Mark 12:28-34, the Gospel for the day, +Michael described some of the distractions which come across his desk: safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, coping with the pain and misery left behind by the shocking behaviour of a minority of priests a generation ago, responding to demands for a new sexual ethic from those who wish to embrace gay marriage and who wish to redefine marriage itself in a much broader way. Other distractions may be the failure of the General Synod to admit women as bishops, to deliver ministry where ordained clergy are very thin on the ground, to set about the reconversion of England and how to reinterpret the Scriptures in a world so changed.

Into these distractions Jesus speaks and gives the first commandment to love God and to love our neighbour. All these issues are to be explored in the light of this commandment. In practice this means we shall say less, be silent more, reflect more deeply, pray more passionately, search more diligently, and thus place love of God and neighbour back where it belongs before all else.



After a splendid lunch in the Cathedral School we conducted the formal business of the General Meeting before issues were raised from the floor. These included:

- the reluctance of the Pensions Board always to give details of retired clergy to Retirement Officers because of Data Protection legislation;
- widely varying PTO regulations in different dioceses;
- retired NSMs and retirement ministry training;
- payment of fees for Sunday services;
- difficulties when retired clergy end House-for-Duty ministry and then need housing provision from the Pensions Board.



By 3 00 pm we were on our way with happy memories of renewed fellowship, inspiring worship, a good lunch and a useful airing of issues we face.

[To read the full text of +Michael's sermon write to:

The Secretary, 15 Albert Road, Chaddesden, DERBY, DE21 6SL, or email david@phypers.co.uk.

See also <http://gloucester.anglican.org/about/the-bishops/sermons-speeches/>]

THE FUNERALS PROJECT

More than a hundred retired clergy responded to the funerals questionnaire the Association sent out to all its members on behalf of the national Funerals Project in spring 2013. Replying online or by post, the survey confirmed that retired clergy fulfil a very important role in providing funerals in England.

The responses suggest that six in every ten retired clergy are asked by funeral directors to conduct one or two funerals a month. One respondent said the number can go as high as ten and a couple more said they were conducting about six a month for funeral directors. However, requests were more likely to come from a parish priest, with almost three-quarters saying they always, sometimes or occasionally receive requests that way or via the parish office.

A third of the respondents would like to do more funerals. Around half of those answering the question as to whether this was to augment their income said it was.

The vast majority visit the family between the death and the funeral, with about a third making two or more visits or supplementing the visits with phone calls and/or emails. The majority follow up after the funeral with calls or visits, several passing on details to the parish priest.

Many respondents suggested ways this ministry might be recognised as part of parochial or diocesan ministry, largely focusing on the importance of communication and coordination with parish clergy. A number gave very thoughtful and detailed responses regarding good practice surrounding funeral ministry and there was strong consensus on the importance of caring for the bereaved family.

“The Funerals Project is listening to all those involved in providing funerals and to those who approach the church when a loved one dies,” said Dr Sandra Millar, Head of Projects for the Archbishops’ Council. “This questionnaire provided useful comments and suggestions. Over the next two years, new ideas will emerge to help the Church of England be excellent across all aspects of this vital ministry. We’ll share those ideas, test them and make sure that retired clergy continue to be part of the conversation.”

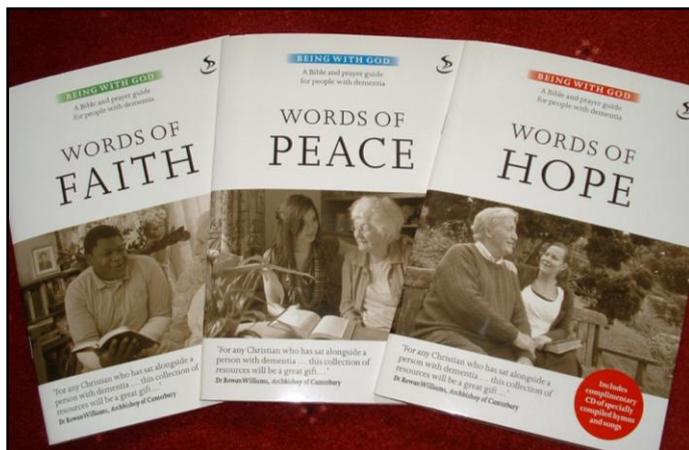
For more information contact:

The Revd Dr Sandra Millar, Head of Projects and Developments,
Archbishops Council, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

Sandra.millar@churchofengland.org

Being with God – Words of Peace, Words of Faith, Words of Hope

This excellent series of Bible readings and prayer guides for people with dementia has been prepared and published by Scripture Union. Margaret Goodall, Chaplaincy Advisor for Methodist Homes for the Aged, the Christian Council on Ageing and the Alzheimer's Society have all been consulted and have given advice during the preparation and production of the notes. The whole series is warmly commended by Pam Rhodes and Lord Williams of Oystermouth.



Each of the three booklets contains 31 *Bible and Prayer Guides*. These all include a short opening prayer, a Bible reading and ideas to *Talk About* arising from the reading. *Cues and Clues* for each day suggest pictures, objects and things to do, related to the day's theme.

Also suggested for each day is a familiar hymn or Sunday School chorus to evoke long-held memories. An accompanying CD is included with each booklet with many special recordings of the hymns and songs suggested.

Words of Hope includes episodes from the life of Jesus (thus providing material for the main festivals of the Christian year) and ten selections from the Psalms.

Words of Peace includes Old Testament readings from the Pentateuch and the Prophets, and New Testament readings from Acts and the Epistles.

Words of Faith centres on Jesus' words and stories, and on Old Testament characters.

While the booklets have been prepared with Christian couples in mind where one partner is suffering from dementia, I have found them invaluable in suggesting ideas for nursing home ministry where long-held memories can be awakened with the ideas suggested.

The booklets retail at £6.99 each, but can be bought for slightly less from Amazon.

DJP

Have you received this Newsletter by Royal Mail? Nearly 1000 of our members now receive their letters by email. Each one saves us about 30p in printing and postage, and hours of time preparing and stuffing envelopes. To receive your Newsletters by email, please send your email address to the Secretary at david@phypers.co.uk.

Do you fully rent your CHARM house from the Pensions Board? Then, as +David has said, be sure to follow developments from July onwards. To be kept in touch, and to share your views with other members, please send your email or mailing address to the Secretary, as above, or to 15 Albert Road, Chaddesden, DERBY, DE21 6SL. We'll start a separate database for our mutual support.

NEW PATTERNS OF MINISTRY

To mark the 60th anniversary of the first ordination of priests trained in the Southwark Ordination Course, a Celebration of and Consultation on Self-Supporting Ministry was held in Southwark Cathedral on 18th May. Because retired clergy who minister are, by definition, self-supporting, Owen Barraclough and Richard Orchard represented the Association.

Owen writes:

At the opening Celebration the Bishop of Sheffield spoke from John 21:17:

- the generosity of God and the need for a generous response from all he calls;
- the humility of God in our Lord Jesus, and our need to be equally humble in our response to him and in our dealings with his children;
- the liminality, or example, of our Lord in living on the edge between the secular world and the Kingdom of God, - ministry today means living the liminal life and especially is this true for those trying to live out new patterns of ministry.

The Consultation then divided into groups of 8-10 to think about:

Practice

Are SSMs only valued for their contribution to parish life? Many spoke of the difficulty of their ministry in their work place being affirmed by the more traditional Church family.

Planning and Strategy

How do dioceses help SSMs fulfil their ministry? Many SSM's work in different areas from their home parishes and this needs to be appreciated by both dioceses concerned.

Summing up the Bishop of Sheffield said: There must be greater flexibility in the whole Church and especially by local parishes and their ministers to appreciate SSM's and their potential. We need to do a lot more considered theology of what being a priest in the work

place means for today. How do people juggle with the loyalty of the firm and its employees to its shareholders, and the loyalty of the priest to her or his Lord?

I was struck with the need to think theologically and help those who retire from paid ministry to feel that their ministry as a priest is full time both at home and when they are filling hole in a parish. We are not stop-gap ministers!!!

Richard writes:

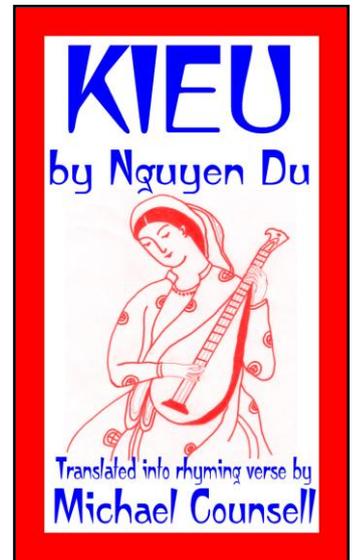
It was good to be part of a very positive celebration of SSM, and good that the Ministry Division invited us to be represented. But its relevance to RCA was minimal. There was no opportunity (in my part of the consultation) to tackle the issue of SSMs in retirement. There seems to be a general acceptance that self-supporting is for ever. But not all SSMs inherit generous pensions. Some are less well-off than ex-stipendiaries. This raises issues about fees for occasional offices and Sunday services outside their own parishes. The celebratory nature of the occasion (and maybe the relatively affluent state of most participants) was inimical to tackling this.

There was much talk of SSMs being fully included in team/collaborative ministry. This becomes different, I think, in retirement. There are situations where retired priests are fully included in parish and deanery planning. In areas with numerous retired clergy (e.g. on the south coast, and in my experience in the Peak District of Derbyshire) full inclusion swamps the full-time ministry and is not appropriate (or at least not at every meeting).

It was clear at the consultation that we are moving away fast from the solo incumbent as the norm to a situation where a full-time priest has to co-ordinate a range of ministry including SSMs, readers, retired clergy and lay leaders of various sorts. Are the colleges and courses preparing ordinands for this?

Michael Counsell writes:

In my retirement, I have just self-published a book! It is a translation into English rhyming verse of a long poem in Vietnamese called *Kieu*, by Nguyen Du (1765–1820). *Kieu* is the greatest work of literature in the Vietnamese language, and tells the story of a beautiful and talented girl, who becomes engaged to a handsome student, but then sells herself into marriage to save her father, who is falsely accused of debt. One disaster follows another, as she is sold repeatedly into prostitution and marriage, is treated as a slave, and attempts suicide. There are periods of happiness, too, and the story, which is told with intensely poetic descriptions of the beauty of nature and music, and some humour, has a happy ending.



To me the story symbolises the suffering of Vietnamese women in the twentieth century. I began to translate this when I was the Embassy Chaplain in Saigon in 1968, and it has been published in Hanoi, but this is the first time it has become easily available outside Vietnam. If you, or a friend acting for you, should go onto the Amazon website and search under *Michael Counsell Kieu*, you will be able to look at the opening 10% of the pages to decide whether you like it. If you do, you can choose between the paperback version and pay Amazon to post it to you; or the e-book for your Kindle, Ipad, Iphone or other types of tablet, which is cheaper and downloaded to your device post free, but with VAT added in the UK. Alternatively, you could order the paperback from a bookshop by quoting the ISBN: 9781482617269.

The Church is the Body of Jesus on earth
whose hands scarred in dying
are ready to serve
With arms widely open in welcoming care
To mend broken hearts
and His healing to share.

The Church is a temple of worshipping love
Where God's gentle Spirit
descends like a dove.
A pillar of strength in the sanctuary space
A presence of glory and altar of grace.

The Church is a family where all find a home
And sharing God's love, none is ever alone
A place of forgiving,
where grace may extend
For mother or brother, for sister or friend.

The Church is God's salt
and His comforting leaven
Where nations find hope
in the Kingdom of Heaven

And lifting their hands in petitioning prayer
They foster Christ's peace
in a world of despair.

The Church is an army still fighting for truth
To conquer all evil, wild angers to sooth
A people of faith who dare follow their King
Whose Kingdom within will His victory bring.

The Church is a garden
of praying and peace
Where fruits of the Spirit may ever increase
A place where the flowering
of goodness is known
And fragrance of kindness is joyfully shown.

The Church is a fellowship gathered in one
Where differences blend
in the love of God's Son
A place of communion and spiritual quest
The haven of stillness
where all may find rest.

Need a snappy saying for a sermon?

- I don't suffer from insanity -- I enjoy every minute of it!
- I used to have a handle on life, but it broke.
- You're just jealous because the voices only talk to me.
- Beauty is in the eye of the beer holder.
- I'm not a complete idiot -- some parts are missing!
- God must love stupid people -- He made so many!
- Consciousness: that annoying time between naps.
- Being "over the hill" is much better than being under it.
- Wrinkled was not one of the things I wanted to be when I grew up.
- Procrastinate now!
- A hangover is the wrath of grapes.
- A picture is worth a thousand words, but it uses up three thousand times the memory.
- Ham and eggs -- a day's work for a chicken, a lifetime commitment for a pig.
- I'm smiling because I don't know what's going on.



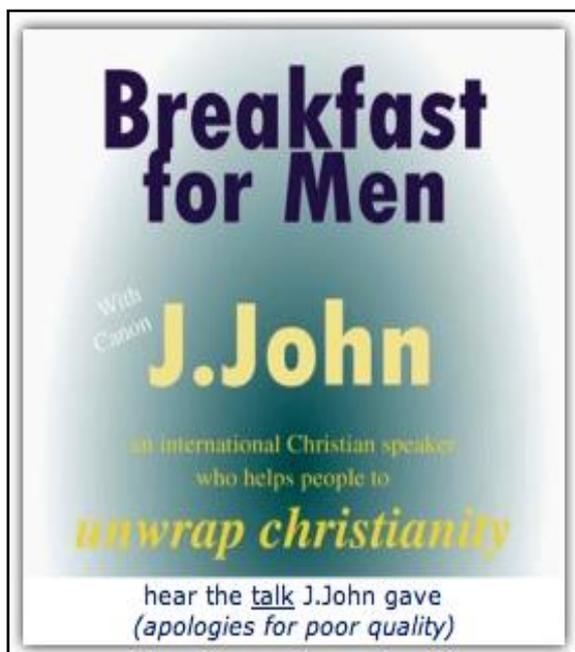
Who could fail to be inspired?



A timely warning



Who says clergy get no perks?



AND SERIOUSLY – We are still looking for a Council member for the Dioceses of Winchester, Guildford and Portsmouth. Could this be you? Contact david@phypers.co.uk