



From the Chairman

‘Christmas! It’s the children’s time, isn’t it?’

How many times have we heard that being said as we have exercised the ministry to which the Lord God has called us? Many, I suspect!

As we hear that sort of comment, it is good to say, ‘Yes, it certainly is, as we are all children, all children whom the Lord God loves so much that He gave us His Son, Jesus. Yes, that *is* what Christmas is all about. It certainly *is* for children!’

One of the tragedies of our time is the way in which people think of God as some divine potentate who holds us all on strings like puppets, and then, when things go wrong, they blame God and get very angry with those who seek to represent Him.

As we look at the child Jesus in the manger at Bethlehem, we are invited, not to see a pretty picture with clean animals and lots of snow, but the whole risky business of unconditional Love, for that is who God in Christ is. As we read the Gospels we see that love unfolding until it reaches its climax on the Cross and in the Resurrection.

Christmas is a time when large numbers of people come to our Church buildings and

when many of us who are retired will be taking services. It is also a time when in our homes we will have opportunities to talk with people about what we really are celebrating at Christmas. Sharing something of the wonder of this unconditional love that we see in Jesus is a way of trying to connect with people who may have some strange ideas about who God is, and who are often longing to find healing, purpose and meaning in life.

When I was about to be consecrated as a bishop, the parish where I had been the Vicar some eight years before, gave me my Pectoral Cross, and on it was the text 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 which I always say when I put it on. It ends, ‘For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.’

Yes, Christmas is the children’s time and we are all His children, but we all need to recover the wonder that so many children have, as we contemplate afresh God’s weakness and unconditional love that we see in Jesus at Bethlehem, on the Cross and risen from the dead.

Happy Christmas!

+David



Letter to the Editor

Two statements in the Summer Newsletter 2015 are open to question. In *Multi-Congregation Ministry* Malcolm Grundy writes, 'My aim is to begin with theology, rather than practical solutions,' and in *To Chapter or Not?* Hugh Beavan, remarking on the lack of welcome of retired clergy in some chapter meetings says, 'And for good reason, as they would overwhelm the non-retired clergy!'

However this lack of welcome is also to be found in chapters with few retired clergy. I suggest that the main reason for this lack is that incumbents have grown accustomed to working alone, doing their own thing in their own way - the vicar knows best and the laity are inclined to agree, thus making it difficult to include another experienced priest.

Both of these statements exhibit forms of *Leadership by Experts* when other viable forms of leadership might be more appropriate. Below is a very brief summary of our experience in a small rural parish in the early Seventies.

It became clear to us that, with the decreasing number of priests, it would not be many years before we ceased to be a sole charge parish, so we began to consider what form of ministry this might require and how to prepare for it.

We first decided that it would be the PCC, with the incumbent being one member,

that would provide the necessary leadership. We met on several Sunday afternoons to think through what the work was that made the Church the Church. Having decided what that work was we then set up a series of objectives and the means to secure these.

As we worked, appropriate leadership roles emerged as members made their own specific contributions. My main role was to maintain the harmony and unity of the group, in unity with the Church, as we worked towards a common mind.

We also gradually discovered that the practices of the Church were in themselves statements of theology, though not always articulated as such. It also became clear that the work we were doing involved every member of our congregation, the parish and the diocese.

This process was to be followed each year as we gained in experience. It was exciting work because it was our work. It was rewarding work as we were able to check our progress.

We did not see this as a universal way forward since every parish differs. I only offer it to indicate that there are alternative forms of leadership.

With fraternal greetings from a fellow retired priest,

David Cherry, Rearsby, Leicestershire



CONCRETE HOLINESS

Geoff Smith took early retirement in 2007 to care for his wife Janet who has MS. He was invited to join the Guild of Priests at Carlisle Cathedral, and was subsequently appointed Poet in Residence for the year 2014. He writes:

'I began my year with the intention of creating a series of nine spare, terse, schematic works or "posters" each reflecting an aspect of monastic life and then through an iterative process to make linkages between the monasticism practised on this historic site and what is coming to be known as New Monasticism. [The posters were exhibited as A1 posters in the Cathedral during the Carlisle Literary Festival and subsequently published in *The Way*, the Diocesan newspaper.]

'The nine poems are not intended to be definitive but are offered as a contribution to the conversation about sacred space/new monasticism currently being developed in Chapter and through the wider Cathedral community.

'Stylistically these poems may be seen as reflective of other poetic forms such as Haiku, although they do not conform to the accepted haiku pattern. Each is however shaped around three verses or paragraphs and to some extent I see this pattern linking to the form developed by Celtic Christians to express their faith in a God revealed as a Trinity of persons in community.

'The poems are each connected by a quotation from Thomas Merton [*this is how the Church is made of living stones, compacted by mercy*], which I use as an epigraph.'

Nativity

**Her waters break
Sensing
His arrival
She hears
Sentinel notes
Sounding across
Still Earth
Waiting anxiously
For the new
Born's arrival
Beast's
Breath warms
Chill air
Mingling
With the scent
Of earthen floors
As the eternal
Is enfleshed
In night
Stillness**

© Geoff Smith from
*Antiphons for my
Seventieth Year*

Email subscribers to this Newsletter may view these poems in a separate attachment, *Concrete Holiness*.

Geoff's latest collection, *Antiphons for my Seventieth Year*, is also available free of charge with C5 SAE (large letter stamp, please) to Canon Geoff Smith at 30 Waters Meet, Warwick Bridge, CARLISLE, CA4 8RT – no charge but donation to purchaser's charity of choice. Follow Geoff's blog at <http://geoffsmiththinkingaloud.blogspot.com>.



My dear Grandchild,

By the time this letter is of interest to you I expect I shall no longer be around. What sort of a planet will I have left behind? Or, what's more to the point, what sort of a world will you be passing on to your next generation?

I hope your world will be sustainable, with a break put on runaway climate change. Your houses will need better insulation; your energy will have to be greener and your diet nearer vegetarian. Long travel may become a luxury; it's cheaper and cleaner to explore with electronic eyes.

May you find a way to iron out some of our world's glaring inequalities so that people have enough to eat. May you learn how to treat other people and their governments with respect, something my generation has failed to do.

Please be concerned above all for relationships. They are so much more important than digits, balances and goals. May you treat others with respect and experience respect from others.

The greatest gift is to know that we are loved – by other people and above all by God. God's love (which for me is most fully expressed in Jesus) enables us to accept and forgive ourselves and to pass on that love and forgiveness to others.

I hope you bond together in a community of faith which could be the Church but maybe different from what we know now. I don't mind if it's smaller as long as it keeps its sense of worship, its love, integrity and prophetic fire. May it and all faiths, as they draw on their traditions to break down barriers, be a model for the world as it was intended to be.

How can I help you now? At least I can avoid getting in the way. I can be thankful and praise what is good. May I be honest about the mistakes I have made and give encouragement to others.

The changes needed are huge and time is running out. But I have learnt not to be surprised. The most depressing forecast I remember was in about 1963, when a well-informed, deeply troubled, liberal white South African, assured us that the only way apartheid could change was through a mighty blood-bath. We waited but it never came. You can never know what's behind the corner or what God can do. But we must play our part.

I wonder what you will write when you're as old as me?

Your ever-loving Grandfather

John Nightingale retired in 2007 as Vicar of Rowley Regis and Warden of Readers in Birmingham Diocese. Since then he has been a Retirement Officer in Birmingham Diocese and an RCA Council Member. He will retire from these positions at the end of this year. He enjoys Permission to Officiate in Birmingham and Lichfield Dioceses

CANON PETER GREEN'S 'DISPATCHES FROM THE HOME FRONT' by +Frank Sargeant

At Christmas 1915 there was no fraternising between the Allied and German troops, no football matches, no carol singing. Canon Peter Green had been writing his *Artifex* articles of 2000 words in the *Manchester Guardian* weekly for five years.

The Archbishops had called for a 'Day of Intercession' at the end of the year but Green was critical because the purpose was not evident and he thought that the form of service produced was useless. What he wanted was for the Church to repent of her attitude to war as being honourable and a purge. She needed to support her sons fighting for a just cause and to pray for a vision to take a third of the population out of poverty and give her children a chance in life. He was concerned that service families were going hungry on the allowance of sixpence a day for the wife and a penny a day for each child. He feared that in many cases the allowance was spent on drink.

During 1915 he had taken part in memorial services in Manchester Cathedral, where he was a residentiary canon as well as being rector of St Philip's Salford, for members of three battalions of the Manchester Regiment who had fallen in the Dardanelles at the Gallipoli campaign. He had held funerals with full military honours for his 'lads' who had died in battle abroad so that the relatives could grieve and he could give them pastoral support. He was indignant at the proposal professional football should be discontinued on the grounds that 'louts watch football whilst our brave boys are giving their lives' but horse racing was continued 'because our brave boys would want to know the result of the Derby!'

He mourned the death of Edith Cavell and expressed his revulsion at her treatment by the Germans. He had known her when she was a district nurse in the Bradford part of Manchester in 1907 before going to Brussels. He remembered her as 'a woman of exceptional beauty and strength of character, wholly devoted to her work and the

service of others'. Edith Cavell's name appears on the war memorial outside Sacred Trinity Church, Salford, where Green was the Rector and it is assumed that she worshipped there as an Anglo-Catholic. Green stated that the public outcry was greater than that expressed at the sinking of the *Lusitania* with the loss of 1,200 lives.

In 1916 he expressed his dismay at a proposed National Lottery and the idea of publishing Government bonds in the face of the rise in the cost of living. He was a fierce opponent of both betting and drinking. 'Treating soldiers to drink whilst on leave had been banned in London and he wished it were so generally. One soldier on leave in Salford was said to have 120 pints of beer on the slate!

He was roundly condemned as he pleaded forgiveness for, and reconciliation with, the enemy. He realised that it was difficult as German atrocities were reported at the Battle of Verdun; the Battle of the Somme had caused a huge loss of allied lives, and the Zeppelin raids had started war in the air and threatened civilians.

He was appalled by Professor Headlam of Kings College London, later to be Bishop of Gloucester, who had stated war and inequalities in society to be inevitable. Green replied that Headlam had not known poverty, which caused prostitution and stunted growth. What he advocated was 'evangelical poverty' by which those who had enough gave to those who had little. He was accused of materialism.

At the end of 1916 on the 12 December Germany made a peace proposal. Asquith was interested but resigned as Prime Minister when his government turned against him. Green observed sadly that 'bellicose' church leaders were amongst the most vocal in rejecting the proposal and in his New Year message he prophesied war-weariness, social and economic dislocation, and a violent thirst for pleasure after the war.....*to be continued.*

Bishop Frank Sargeant is a former Chairman of the Association. Write to him at:
32 Brotherton Drive, SALFORD, M3 6BH for a copy of the complete booklet. Enclose a large letter stamp.

Your Waterways Need You!



Archbishop Justin meets Waterways chaplains on a recent visit to Watford.

Ministry to those whose lives revolve around Britain's inland waterways is on the move: and you could be part of it!

Think of the word 'chaplain' and we immediately think of schools,

tertiary education, hospitals, prisons and the armed forces; probably not the waterways, rivers and canals.

Yet Britain is criss-crossed by an amazing network of canals and rivers, on and around which live and work thousands of people. We may think of them as recreational resources, but the colourful narrow boats and Dutch barges lining our towpaths, as well as purpose-built houseboats, provide comfortable homes and business bases to a large mobile population embracing all ages.

Inland waterways people may be involved with maintenance of its marinas and other service providers, or they may be recreational day boaters, canoeists, anglers or towpath walkers. One thing is certain: they all share a powerful connection with the rivers and canals which, beautiful though they are, can conceal human need as effectively as any suburban street, hospital ward, college or even regimental mess.

For some years there have been chaplains to waterways people, but 2015 has seen a move forward in the appointment, albeit

part time, of a Senior Chaplain, the Revd Mark Chester. Based at Workplace Matters within the Diocese of St Albans offices, this national vibrant expression of chaplaincy is growing quickly.

'Chaplaincy to the waterways is expanding and being appreciated by the major national managing bodies' says Mark. 'There are chaplains working in many regions already, providing pastoral support to waterways people but I am very keen to recruit recently retired but active clergy as waterways chaplains to work with me – especially in the Midlands where many canals and rivers converge.'

'Chaplains might work for between half a day to two days a week, on "their own" stretch of waterway. They can work when they like but they are part of a very supportive nationwide network whose ministry I am there to encourage and facilitate.'

'Pay? None! Expenses? Same again!' says Mark, 'but no previous experience is required, just a sense that God might be seeking to use existing pastoral skills and enthusiasm in a way which could prove very satisfying. I know that some clergy have found their waterways involvement a really excellent "bridge" between full-time parish work and full retirement.'

To learn more, please contact:

*Revd Mark Chester, Senior Chaplain Waterways, Workplace Matters,
41 Holywell Hill, ST ALBANS, AL1 1HE
or email waterways@workplacematters.org.uk.*

COUNCIL VACANCIES

RCA is served by a Council of 12 members (plus the Chairman and the Secretary/Treasurer) each representing a group of dioceses. We currently have vacancies for members to represent the Dioceses of:

London and Southwark

Bath and Wells, Bristol, Gloucester, and Salisbury

Birmingham, Hereford, Lichfield, Worcester

If you live in any of these dioceses and wish to know more about filling one of these interesting and important positions please contact me **before the end of January 2016** at david@phypers.co.uk. We particularly wish to hear from new members.

A NEW NAME

At our Summer AGM we became the **Retired Clergy Association of the Church of England – RCACOE**. So now we need a new logo (RCACOE) and a new letter-head which will include the logo. Do you, a friend or a relative enjoy graphic design skills? Would you like to design a new letter-head and logo for us? Please send your efforts, if possible before the end of January 2016, to david@phypers.co.uk.

CAR INSURANCE

I have recently learned that, as a retired clergyperson, I need business car insurance in order to use my car in connection with taking funerals, weddings, and church services for which I may receive fees. Please check your situation with your insurer or broker. Tax relief may be claimed on the **additional business premium**. DJP



No you fools! I said cheese & tomato!

Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy 2015.

In 2003 The Convocations published a set of *Guidelines for the Clergy*. A revised edition has now been published. Over the past twelve years much has changed in the life of our Church, including the *Clergy Discipline Measure*, the new *Ordinal* and the new *Terms of Service Measure*. It would be easy for those of us who are retired to feel that this is nothing to do with us - now!

The *Guidelines* are set out, not as a series of regulations, but as a commentary on the *Ordinal* and the questions that were asked of us at Ordination. Reading through them, I was struck yet again at the huge privilege and the great responsibility we have, and being reminded of this is important. The document also includes a helpful theological reflection by Francis Bridger, along with other information to keep us up to date. I commend the *Guidelines* to you, as a way of refreshing the continuing ministry to which the Lord God has called us.

+David Jennings

The *Guidelines* may be accessed at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/about-general-synod/convocations/guidelines-for-the-professional-conduct-of-the-clergy.aspx>.

They may also be purchased as a paperback at £7.99 from:

Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, LONDON, SW1P 3BN.

Retired Clergy Association

President: Rt Revd Robert Atwell, Bishop of Exeter

Chairman: Rt Revd David Jennings

Laurel Cottage, East End, Northleach, CHELTENHAM, GL54 3ET

Telephone: 01451 860743

Email: bishopdavidjennings@gmail.com

Secretary and Treasurer:

Revd David Phypers,

15 Albert Road, Chaddesden, DERBY, DE21 6SL

Telephone: 01332 239134

Email: david@phypers.co.uk

Please send items for the Lent Newsletter before the end of January 2016.



Email or Snail Mail?

Over 1600 members now receive their Newsletters in colour by email, saving us time and expense. If your letter has come by snail mail and if you have an email address, please send it to david@phypers.co.uk.

