

## **The Chairman's Report to the Annual Meetings of the Association 2015**

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

First, it was good to welcome the Bishop of Exeter

as our President at our meeting earlier this month at Bury St. Edmunds. I hope that during his time he will be able to come to one of our Northern meetings.

**D**uring the year we have welcomed Malcolm Grundy to represent the North East. We were sad that, after just one meeting of the Council, Charles Bradshaw withdrew as the representative of London and Southwark.

In June last year the document *Supporting the Ministry of the Retired Clergy* was published, and it was good to see that our help in producing that document, which has gone to all Bishops, was acknowledged by the Bishop of Manchester in the foreword.

The main thing that has taken up a huge amount of our time and energy was the work following the publication of the Pensions Board proposals for changes to the rental arm of the CHARM Scheme. I touched on this in my report last year, explaining how we

had welcomed the opportunity to comment on the proposals as they were being formulated.

**I** am not going to rehearse here what the proposals as published in July were, as they have been widely published. The key concern from members of the RCA was the way in which the proposals for the Target Rents were going to be implemented, with some of our members who were paying more than their new rent, having to wait to up 50 years to get to that point! The Council considered this at their October meeting and requested a meeting with the Chair of the Pensions Board and representatives of the Church Commissioners and the General Synod.

The upshot of this is that those whose rents were right at the top end and would have taken so long to get to their Target Rent have, from April 1<sup>st</sup>, enjoyed a concession. This is a very welcome outcome, but the Council will continue to monitor the progress of the scheme and hope, as I know the officials at the Pensions Board hope, that there will be a point when everyone is on their Target Rent sooner rather than later.

**W**e continue to work on our new Constitution and hope that this will be endorsed by the Charity Commission soon. This will then give us all the advantages of charitable status.

Work is also in progress on a Website and we are grateful to Peter Bowes, to Malcolm Grundy and to our Secretary David Phypers for all that they are doing on this. We hope that it will go live in October.

Over the past twelve months I have continued my practice of going around the country meeting with RCA Council members and Retirement Officers - with meetings in Salisbury with nine dioceses represented, in Worcester with the West Midlands group and in Manchester with the Northwest. I have further meetings planned in October at York with the Northeastern dioceses and in Sheffield with the East Midlands dioceses. I find these meetings very helpful, and it is interesting how the same issues are raised in each place.

In reporting these to the Council, they agreed that I should write to all the Diocesan and Area Bishops setting out the issues and with a list of suggested questions, asking that these be discussed at their Staff meeting. The issues in my letter included - how pastoral care is given to the retired, how the skills that people still might offer are known and used, what percentage of the fee for occasional offices is offered to a retired priest (General Synod recommended 80%) and what ongoing training is offered to the retired; whether they had picked up any difficulties over the change to Target

Rents; if the June 2014 document I referred to earlier had been discussed; what preparation was offered for retirement and whether they offered life membership of the RCA to those who were retiring. I am very much looking forward to seeing what response we get to the letter and if there is a discernible change across the dioceses.

I want to thank in your name, David our Secretary and Treasurer who works constantly for our Association, producing the Newsletter, corresponding with members, encouraging new members and, of course, preparing for the Council and Annual meetings. This past year has seen a huge amount of work relating to the CHARM Scheme change over, and David has kept me and my colleagues well briefed. David, thank you.

**O**wen Barraclough has been a member of the RCA Council for 17 years - that is a long stint in retirement! Latterly he has also been Vice Chair. Owen has taken the lead on the difficult and prolonged negotiations with the Charity Commission. Since I have been Chair, he has been generous in his time and wisdom - I and the whole Council will miss his energetic contributions very much indeed - Owen, thank you for all that you have given.

And thank you for all that you are and do, for the ministry that you continue to exercise - that many might know the name of Jesus and that GOD might be glorified.

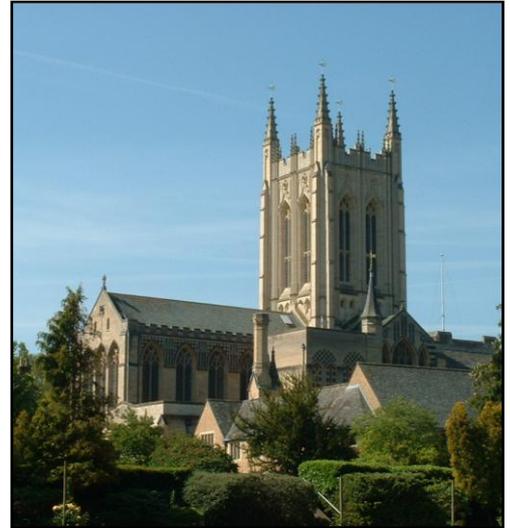
+ David Jennings  
June 2015



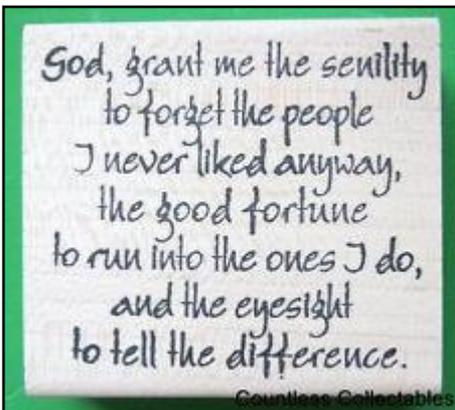
## SUMMER CELEBRATION IN EAST ANGLIA

'Whatever you do, Robert, never allow yourself to be photographed with a drink in your hand!' So the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, advised Robert Atwell when he installed him as Bishop of Stockport.

Now Bishop of Exeter, Robert travelled to Bury St Edmunds earlier this month to share in a General Meeting with over 40 Association members. We met, on a glorious summer's day, in St Edmundsbury Cathedral, by kind permission of the Dean, the Very Revd Frances Ward.



The day, the Feast of St Barnabas, began with Eucharist in the Cathedral's Lady Chapel. Bishop Robert presided and preached. He made us laugh as he quoted the Senility Prayer, and then encouraged us to follow the example of Barnabas in goodness, generosity and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

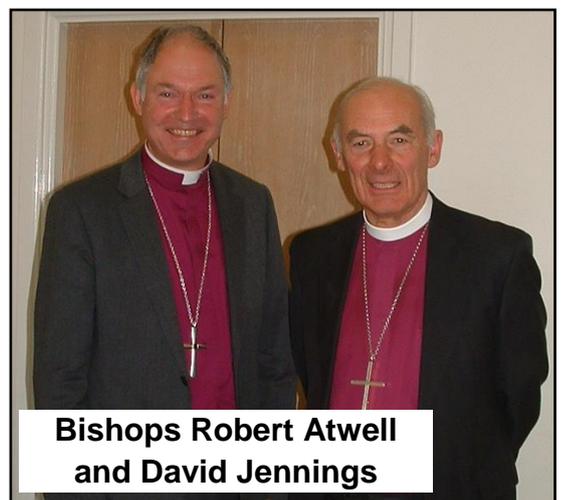


After lunch and the business of the General Meeting, Bishop Robert addressed us again. He spoke of profound changes taking place in our nation and in our Church.

He looked forward to the establishing of the senior leadership academy, and of the need to resource ministerial ordination. The target is to reach a 50% increase in ordinations by 2017. Part of the future funding to dioceses from the Church Commissioners will be made in response to bids for missionary enterprise.

Bishop Robert stressed the priority of prayer, of our need for a fresh vision of God, that we might see church growth in numbers and holiness. We must support clergy in the parishes that they might enjoy renewed confidence in the Gospel.

As we go to press we are looking forward to our Annual General Meeting on 26 June. This year, once again by kind invitation of the Archbishop of York, we are going to Bishopthorpe. As at Bury St Edmunds, more than 40 of us are looking forward to this day, to Archbishop John's generous hospitality, and to his personal ministry among us.



**Bishops Robert Atwell and David Jennings**

## **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**

Council members become Trustees of the RCA on appointment. They are nominated by the Chairperson to the Council for a period of five years and their appointment is ratified at the next AGM. Their appointment can be extended for further periods in a similar manner.

Council members' primary task is to ensure that the Association keeps to its aim of caring for the retired clergy with a view to co-ordinating and forwarding their interests and encouraging fellowship amongst them.

Council members are advised to be in touch with the RCA Secretary to identify the RCA groups and their convenors in their allotted area, and then to find out the nature of the groups and their activities.

Council members should give a report of the activities of their respective groups, preferably written, at the twice yearly Council meetings. They should also make enquiries concerning the care of the retired clergy in their area groups. This will entail contact with the Retirement Officer(s) and local RCA Secretaries where they exist.

Council members should be familiar with email and able to travel to London for Council meetings. Travelling expenses will be met by the Association.

If you live in any of the dioceses listed above and would like to offer yourself to serve on the Council please contact the Secretary as soon as possible, and by the end of September at the latest. Contact details are on the back page. You do not need to be nominated and seconded. If more than one person from each group of dioceses offers, elections will be organised.

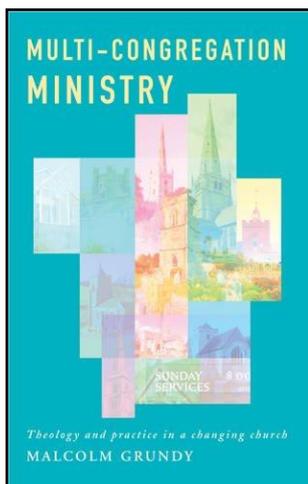
Council will be particularly pleased to receive offers for Council membership from women members of the Association.

DJP

# MULTI-CONGREGATION MINISTRY – *Theology and Practice in a Changing Church*

Malcolm Grundy – Vice Chair, Retired Clergy Association

Canterbury Press, £18.99



Many or most retired clergy are assisting in multi-congregation situations. I hope that the book which I have just produced will be of help and interest. We now have a completely new situation in most of our parishes and it presents a range of different pastoral, liturgical and

organizational questions and it is these which I am addressing in this book.

## Changes in local ministry

Some of the ways in which local congregational life has changed seem universal and pose common questions:

- How to overcome a local sense of loss
- How to provide adequate pastoral care
- How to delegate with trust
- How to welcome newcomers
- How to provide for the needs of many age-groups
- How to sense direction with an absent full-time minister
- How to encourage liturgical and musical innovation
- How to share expertise on buildings maintenance
- How to communicate between congregations
- How to remain outward-facing

## A proposed way forward

To propose a solution I ask whether one central idea can be redesigned to explore a fundamental question which asks if and how the word chosen by early churches working together, *episcopo* – literally 'watching-over' – can be experienced in a new way. My aim is to begin with theology rather than practical solutions and I suggest a new

definition which I call 'watching over one-another in community'. How this 'watching over' can be done will depend on how local congregations have been joined together. I have observed nine multi-congregation situations and describe them each with different pastoral and organizational questions.

## Faith in oversight

Many advantages can be discovered by being part of such multi-congregation groupings. A much stronger sense of 'local ownership' can exist and can become a creative driving force for change. Distinctive styles of worship can flourish and the experiences of experiment exchanged. New ways of working together can be explored.

There are disadvantages also. The most serious is that the absence of a resident minister can produce 'drift' or a lack of overall direction. The possibility is present that dominant groups or personalities can control local worship and activity, prevent newcomers from joining and 'freeze' activity in a past view of what church life should be like. There can feel a sense of disconnectedness and even that the minister favours one congregation over the others.

## A prophetic presence

Having listened, analysed, reflected and proposed ways of understanding and living in multi-congregation situations some robust markers for progress have emerged. Much work is being done locally but not in isolation. Ecumenical agreements suggest that the work of ministry should be done *personally, collegially and communally*. My analysis shows that local congregations need three fundamental things:

- *Members need to be encouraged to grow as individuals.*
- *As grouped congregations they need to feel that they are going somewhere together.*

- *Individually and collectively they must feel that they can trust their leaders.*

Many clergy are affected by the strain of such work while others get an exaggerated sense of their own self-importance. I have offered a chapter dedicated to each of these all too human and prevalent issues.

This is the shape of our church for now and for the future. In a final chapter I attempt to summarise all that can be celebrated.

### 1) Faith Hubs

Faith hubs are in practice what multi-congregation ministries have become. They give support to local congregations and establish much needed local identity to communities undergoing change. More than anything else their virtue lies in that they are local and take the name of their locality.

### 2) Community support networks

Churches and their congregations are often the main unifying component of a group of communities. In many places they share this, in varying degrees with schools and village halls. The establishment of community support networks gives a strengthened voice to local people. Often it is the local church in this new grouping and wearing its ecumenical clothing, which is the only trusted body which can voice and act on local concerns.

### 3) A barometer for local opinion

Local churches remain the one presence which covers the whole of a country. In local groupings feelings about community issues can be sensed with some accuracy and, where appropriate can be voiced. Often, it is the local church which can speak out on a strongly felt issue or hold public discussion where the weight of opinion can be measured. The scale of rural and urban deprivation and hardship can be substantiated with real stories. Local trusts and community funds can be established with other partners to meet immediate community needs.

### 4) Workshops for liturgy

The development and exchange of good practice, not least in the appropriate and varied use of liturgies makes local congregations networks for creativity. In a large grouping there is space, both for the preservation and imaginative use of traditional liturgies and also the unoccupied space where experiment can take place – and reflect local need. Thoughtful and well-constructed liturgy demonstrates the outward work and concerns of a congregation.

### 5) Shapers of community identity

Churches are the embodiment and repository of community identity and memory. The great advantage of being grouped in appropriate ways is that memory can be honoured, shared and celebrated. Continuity can be safeguarded since one community can bring 'checks and balances' to another. Social and economic differences, local rivalries and aspirations can be levelled in the equality experienced when those who otherwise differ 'come to church together'.

### 6) Springboards for development

The purpose of vibrant Christian communities is to enable individuals to grow and develop, for all to experience a sense of direction and for boundaries to be known and on occasions crossed. This corporate activity enables just that possibility of growth and the movement on to new places.

### 7) Landscapes of transcendence

In a most affirming way when they work well they are real 'landscapes of transcendent culture'. By the very nature of partnership between groups of congregations in the context of their wider communities a patchwork of landscape, architecture, industry, commerce, leisure and local activity is brought together. Each has its own identity sometimes shaped by generations and always the object of hope and aspiration. It is through the contribution of integrated faithful communities another dimension can be added.

## TO CHAPTER OR NOT?

Hugh Beavan

When I was a rural dean I made a point of visiting the five or six retired clergy in the deanery in order to get to know them, to affirm their ministry, and encourage them to come to chapter meetings. I also made a point of calling on a newly retired priest who had just moved into the deanery in order to welcome him and his wife to the deanery. And we made a point of always including retired clergy and their spouses and clergy widows in any chapter social events in the deanery.

I know from personal experience that this is not always general practice and that in some parts of the country where there are large numbers of retired clergy, they are not welcome at chapter meetings. And for good reason, as they would overwhelm the non-retired clergy!

In Colchester Deanery we seem to have struck a happy medium: retired clergy are invited to three chapter meetings a year, one of which is a eucharist and breakfast meeting, and to the annual chapter supper party. Two or three other meetings are designated as 'house of clergy' to which only licensed clergy are invited.

But we are blessed with having an additional forum for learning and fellowship in the Colchester and District Clerical Society. Its origins are now lost in the mists of time: originally for Anglican clergy only, we are now fully ecumenical, although still (sadly) predominantly Anglican in our membership. We have about 30 members and an average attendance of about 16-20, of whom about three quarters are retired clergy. The annual subscription is a modest £20.

As Chair I have the pleasant task of organizing the programme and the speakers who cover a wide variety of topics.



This year's speakers include, amongst others, a solicitor and mental health tribunal judge on *My legal highs*; the hymnwriter-priest Patrick Appleford on *Reflections and predictions after 60 years as a priest in the Church of England*; the former editor of the *Church Times*, Dr Bernard Palmer, on *My life with the Church Times*; and talks entitled *CS Lewis: half a century on*, *Friends of the Poor in South India*, *The evolution of dioceses* and *What has governance to do with the Church of England?* There is always plenty of time for questions and discussion.

In August we normally have a social event for members and spouses: one year we had a guided tour of Colchester's magnificent baroque Town Hall followed by a shared meal; last year we visited the Tiptree Jam Factory museum and tea room; this year we are visiting a local stately home, Layer Marney Tower.

We meet once a month at the local Holiday Inn who provide us with an excellent two-course lunch plus coffee for only £9-50. Members only pay £7-50, and there is no charge for the meeting room.

It would be good to know if similar clerical societies exist in other areas and if retired clergy are welcome to join them.

## Ministry in Retirement     John S Barnes (Queen's, Birmingham 1958-1961)

After thirty four years ministering in various urban jungles in the West Midlands, I felt very much at a loose end. I wondered how else I could best occupy my time. Saying 'goodbye' after nine years in one particular parish I remembered asking a parishioner rather foolishly, imprudently, and certainly conceitedly, 'Well, Harry (not his real name), what did you make of me?' This man, our Scout leader, not an easy conversationalist, in fact a man who spoke rarely and then only after several minutes deliberation, scratched his head. Responding with a slow, rather affectionate smile, he muttered, 'Good at flannel.'

Other matters took up my time before reflecting further on Harry's 'encouraging' response: helping out at various churches, taking services, pastoral work. Then I recalled how easily I wrote my stuff in the monthly parish magazine. Could there be a clue here? I joined a local Writers Group. Each month members produced short stories, poetry etc. Then at the ripe old age of seventy-eight I gained admission to Nottingham Trent University to study for a Masters in Creative Writing, gaining a merit.

I have two books on Amazon Kindle and a third should be there by Easter. I am trying my hand at writing sketches and plays and last Christmas wrote a spoof Nativity play for teenagers, performed at our local church.

---

### 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](mailto:bishopdavidjennings@gmail.com)

**Secretary and Treasurer:**  
Revd David Phypers,  
15 Albert Road, Chaddesden, DERBY, DE21 6SL  
Telephone: 01332 239134  
Email: [david@phypers.co.uk](mailto:david@phypers.co.uk)

**Please send items for the Christmas Newsletter before the end of October.**

---



#### Email or Snail Mail?

Over 1400 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](mailto:david@phypers.co.uk).

