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Summer
Newsletter
2020

from the chair

Dear Friends,

It has been a long and often difficult period which we have just lived through and life now is going to seem somewhat different for the foreseeable future. “New normal” is one of those delightful oxymorons that I don’t find very helpful! Nonetheless a lot of new things are now to become part of our everyday experience. Today I am having my first haircut in four months and wearing a facemask whilst the hairdresser snips away at my overlong locks kitted out in a plastic visor and rubber gloves. Last Sunday my wife and I attended church for the first time since Lent 3 and we were all well “spaced out” and all the new regulations observed. Our churches, whilst the buildings have been closed, have indeed found new ways to worship, stay in contact and support one another, as well as play a very important part in their local communities. Long may that innovative, creative and engaged work continue as we begin to return to our church buildings and fill them with prayers of thanksgiving for all the wonderful work of caring NHS staff and those who responded with sacrificial generosity during this time, and as we remember and commend to God those who have died and continue to suffer. Every Blessing, *+Ian Brackley*

Book Reviews

Despite the limitations imposed by the lockdown it did give me, as well as for you I expect, time and space for additional reading. Here are brief reviews of two substantial books:

The Mirror & the Light by Hilary Mantel (4th Estate publisher, £25)

This is the final part of the trilogy about Thomas Cromwell and his relationship with Henry VIII. At nearly 900 pages it is quite a weight to hold but it will no doubt be out in paperback before Christmas. There is a sense of inevitability about the outcome – Cromwell’s execution – but we are taken into a relationship that showed Henry as a suspicious and demanding sovereign, who trusted no one, and was prepared to use anyone to further his own ends, and Thomas as the parvenu worldly-wise wheeler dealer who very much supported the reforming instincts of others espousing them himself and saw opportunities to further these as he sought in Machiavellian mode to serve the capricious will of his master. At least, that is how Mantel portrays it. One can’t help but admire the detailed historical research that has gone into this and the style in which it is written through the eyes of Cromwell himself. It is captivating and never boring, even if, rather like *War and Peace*, you have occasionally to refer to the table of characters helpfully given at the beginning of the book in order to remember who everybody is! You feel what it is like to be incarcerated in the Tower of London or to be at court where everyone gossips or is on edge at what will Henry do next. I hope this will all be adapted for television as were the previous two novels (*Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*) and that Mark Rylance continues to be cast as Cromwell, a role which I thought he played superbly.

Queen Victoria – Daughter, Wife, Mother, Widow by Lucy Worsley (Hodder & Stoughton, £25)

Lucy Worsley is familiar to many of us for the splendid history programmes she has done on television. Rather like the clergy she enjoys dressing up in historical costume! It is easy to forget that she has an important job as the Chief Curator of the Historic Royal Palaces, but that has given her access to lots of invaluable sources for this book. Rather than follow a more conventional biographical approach we are offered 24 days or vignettes at different stages of Victoria's life. Yet this a very thorough piece of historical research as the many notes and sources bear out. There also some splendid photographs, one of which I particularly like of four generations (Great Grandmamma Victoria, daughter Beatrice, granddaughter Victoria and baby great granddaughter Alice, who was later to become the Princess Royal, the Countess of Athlone), where very unusually for the camera the Queen is clearly amused! There are some wonderful insights into Victoria's complex relationship with her mother, with her utter dependence on Prince Albert and other male figures at various stages, and yet how she astutely renewed the public image of the monarchy over her long reign to a much more stable and popular level than when she first acceded to the throne. A very enjoyable read. I now understand much better those values which my parents inherited – they were both born three years after Victoria died – and which continue to have relevance in our national life. *Ian Brackley*

Wot no Meetings!?!?

Since the March meeting of the RCACoE national Council we have had to cancel the two provincial general meetings and the next national council meeting in October will be held virtually on the morning of 8th Oct., in the afternoon we shall be holding a Zoom General Meeting to enable member participation in at least one meeting this year. If you would like to join the meeting could you please let me know by the end of September, you will then be sent the AGM agenda and papers in the first week of October.

The pandemic and its effects figure to a considerable extent in this newsletter, but I was surprised to receive so little in the way of reflections on the period, which still goes on, back from members. So perhaps some more thoughts for next time?

You will notice that this a less colourful edition than you are used to, apologies for that but the good news is that we have found a new editor who will transform this production when he begins in January. *Malcolm Liles*

Some thoughts on the lockdown:

Our garden looks better than it has ever done (but no-one can see it - ugh), the house has been spring-cleaned and the garage cleared out; I've serviced the bikes, decorated three rooms, helped my wife with huge jigsaws, made puzzles to send to our seven grandchildren, been on lots of solo cycle rides, done plenty of carpentry (to the shed, pergola, garden seat and fences) and even washed the garage doors and filled in my tax return.

When the weather cooled I came into the study to empty the mail tray, write a guide to the Holy Land for pilgrimage leaders (with 164 bible readings and 74 prayers and meditations) and reduce the filing cabinet; when we retired I cut it from eight drawers to three - plus eleven box files of sermons – my wife told me the other day that if I dropped dead she would no doubt just bin the lot, so perhaps I ought to do that for her!

With church buildings locked and public worship banned, lots of clergy (and others) have been live-streaming worship on the Internet. You may well have been appreciating their attempts. But I can't say I have. However good the music, however homely the priest's study, however excellent the sermon, however beautiful the photography, I've found such worship a poor substitute for the real thing. I can't say I've been finding God online. I find God in people – each one made in God's image. I believe in holy places and pilgrimages to them; but I always find my fellow pilgrims on the journey to be far more important than my arrival at the goal. I'm missing people – be they children or grandchildren, be they friends or strangers, be they male or female, be they young or old, be they sick or healthy, be they mostly good or sometimes bad – because it is in other people's pleasures and needs, joys and sorrows, successes and failures, hopes and fears, that I find God. That is why solitary confinement is such a severe punishment. The lockdown has felt like a punishment for being over 70 and an asthmatic.

Suspect theologians may tell us why they think God has sent this terrible plague on the world – as a punishment or a warning or some other sign. But when I ask "why?" I get no answer. I can only lament (there's a biblical word should you want one) in my frustration, impatience and fear. That gets even worse when I think what it must be like today in a Palestinian refugee camp. I don't think it's my job as a priest to be able to explain why we are suffering the coronavirus. I do think it's my job as a Christian to share the lament and try to offer reassurance. Out of that lament there seem to be emerging new ways of caring ('phone a friend' has taken on a new meaning), new patterns of working, new means of cleaning the environment, new hopes in science and medicine, new purpose for politicians; even Resurrection.

Those who know me will find it hard to believe but I've returned to reading some Theology - including the very long 'The Religious Experience of Mankind' by Ninian Smart - for 50 years it has sat pristine on my bookshelf - dated but a useful read if I return from the lockdown to continue chairing Derby's Multi-Faith Centre's planning and development committee. After 700 tightly packed pages (during which I've learned lots about the Roman Empire's religious life into which Jesus was born, Hinduism, Buddhism, icons, Islam, humanism and so much more) comes this wonderful closing paragraph: "Altogether, the story of man's religious experience is a rich, strange, sometimes bitter, often noble one. In his religious life, and in his rejections of religion, man has expressed his deepest attitudes to the universe about him. Through religion, man has worked out these attitudes in a pattern of daily living and dying. Whether he feels himself surrounded by spirits, or guided by God, or striving towards nirvana, the religious man has tried to see beyond his senses. Is it just imagination, or is it a holy power that has enabled him to do so?"

I wondered whether to start an on-line language course - but couldn't decide whether to revise some Hebrew or Greek or start on Turkish (for a postponed pilgrimage to the Seven Churches of Asia), Arabic (for the Holy Land) or Spanish (for the Camino) ... or why not Amharic for Ethiopia or Romanian ... no, I'll paint another wall or read more Susan Howatch. I've also enjoyed 'Prehistoric Belief' by Mike Williams, now Chapter Clerk of my old cathedral.

My wife and I had to break the lockdown rules, so I'm not prepared to condemn Dominic Cummings! A close relation suddenly came to live with us on the Tuesday of Holy Week and we've had a torrid time helping him survive a breakdown – I never want to be on suicide watch again. Our children are all fine - the only one we see is our son, who lives nearby and does most of our shopping – my wife still doesn't want to start food shopping online - she needs to see it all,

especially the offers; he and our daughter-in-law are both frontline workers and we've sometimes had their two little children for 24 hours rather than send them to school and nursery (which was closed anyway). Our London-based daughters (each with a husband and children) have been working from home, on reduced pay but not reduced hours; both sons-in-law have been furloughed and valiantly trying to do home schooling. I worry that our youngest grandchildren (identical twin girls of 18 months who have learned to walk and talk during this crisis) won't remember who we are when we can eventually hug them again.

Other than missing the family the thing I've hated most is feeling useless – too old to take funerals (although I have done one cremation of a very old friend who died of coronavirus), to help at a food bank, film worship in church, pick vegetables in East Anglia, visit the sick or whatever. I believe the Church got it wrong when it came to the closure of our buildings. I've long believed that a locked church is a contradiction in terms - we could surely have tried to make it possible for people to safely find a space for prayer and reflection in our churches. We like to say that we are committed to every community in the country, but then we shut up shop and went online. But while I've admitted that "virtual church" doesn't really do it for me, I recognise and applaud the tremendous creative efforts that so many clergy have made with streamed services.

Online worship has reportedly attracted a huge and diverse fringe, with more than a quarter of the population having tuned in to at least one service. I hope we don't ignore such people when we get back to something like the old normal – perhaps all our worship will have to be streamed. And how will our regulars react when they can't fast-forward a hymn they don't like or even our sermons? And what are we going to do for those who have lost their jobs, or had their lungs permanently damaged, or seen their savings disappear or failed to mourn their loved ones or been abused or abandoned by those who said they loved them?

As at least the first wave of the crisis seems to be over, we are receiving a wide range of guidance on an almost daily basis from both the government and the national church. It is going to be much more complex to re-open our buildings safely this summer than it was to close them back in March. Benefits will have to be balanced with risks, judgements made about what is best in each context and circumstance. Our vocation as Christians, conferred at our Baptism long before it was repeated at our Ordination, does not depend on buildings; but what does it depend on? I hope our approach to change (a dirty word?) doesn't overwhelm us but provide us with the opportunity to ask questions about purpose and practice, to listen to God more carefully, looking not just to the next few weeks or months, but for the next generation and beyond.

The Very Revd Geoffrey Marshall (a former Dean of Brecon Cathedral)

PS: I had a place to ride my bike in the Prudential Ride London 100 on 16 August. This has been cancelled due to the continuing social distancing rules. However, I still intend to try to cycle 100 miles for Asthma UK on that day - but around Derbyshire rather than London. So please give while I continue to train. Thank you. Please click <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/geoffrey-marshall2>

Holy Communion during a pandemic in the digital age.

My choice of title is quite deliberate. There may be many considerations about Holy Communion in a digital age that we might want to consider in general terms, but it is a quite specific set of circumstances that we are dealing with.

Let us remind ourselves that the quite specific circumstances are that we are under two disciplines – the first is social distancing and the concomitant requirement that we do not gather together in any form of assembly (with some exceptions eg. Parliament, schools making provision for vulnerable children and children of key workers); the second is that all churches should be kept locked. The consequence of that is that we cannot use the buildings in which we would normally assemble nor can we assemble physically.

I doubt that there are many people – if any – who would argue that for a Eucharist to be valid it must take place at a table/altar specifically and exclusively designated for that purpose. Most of those celebrations that have taken place, as far as I know, have made use of a convenient table in a non-public building (that has, of course, changed more recently).

The emergency has given rise to instances of live-streamed Eucharistic celebrations where the president alone, possibly accompanied by other members of the household, have received communion. The practice has relied on either (i) the conviction that those who are watching digitally can commune spiritually (appeal sometimes made to the BCP service of the Communion of the Sick) or (ii) the president encouraging those watching by saying something such as ‘I receive this on behalf of you all.’

However, such a practice, as has been pointed out, runs contrary to the Anglican requirement that there shall only be a communion if there is a minimum of three persons present to receive. The provision of the Communion of the Sick service that allows for only two is very specific to that setting: to apply it to this setting sounds extraordinarily like special pleading (and that provision requires that there be at least one other person in addition to the Curate).

So what alternatives are there? Until now the only possible alternatives that might have been open to us would have depended on the use of the reserved sacrament (probably in the form either of the bread alone or the wafer intincted) which might be delivered to the doorstep of a household in quarantine. I am not aware, however, of instances where that has happened in the past, though it may have done during outbreaks of cholera or similar infections. I have the sense that in most instances the priest would in all probability have simply taken the risk of infection – supposing he stayed around (as Symon Patrick at Covent Garden did in the 1665 plague epidemic in London, when many other clergy fled to the countryside) – and did so in accordance with the opening rubric at the provision for the Communion of the Sick.

However, the emergence of the various digital platforms that make live-streaming and conferencing possible has provided us with entirely novel possibilities. It is possible for people to gather in real time in a way that allows them to see each other and to hear each other and so to gather ‘virtually’ if not physically. It enables conferences, business meetings, social meetings, meetings for the saying of an office or for a prayer meeting and we find no difficulty. No one, I venture to think, would suggest that agreements at a business meeting or prayers are rendered invalid by the meeting not taking place physically. The standing orders or other conventions may require that as a normal practice the meeting should be physical and in one place, but that would simply render the meeting irregular (ie. not in accord with the normal rules).

Some thirty five years ago or more (I can’t remember exactly when, though perhaps Colin Buchanan would) there was a vigorous debate about whether housebound people might place bread and wine in front of their TV screen during a broadcast Eucharist and whether the

elements would be consecrated by the Eucharistic prayer. By common consent it was agreed that whatever the subtleties of the case, it would be a thoroughly improper provision. In the first place it would quickly become a matter of individuals who couldn't be bothered to go to church assuming that they could adopt this ruse. In the second place the Eucharist is essentially a corporate activity. In the third place, there was no reason why the housebound should not have communion brought to them (ideally immediately after communion in church). And in the fourth, the service on TV might well not be live-streamed but a recording.

But the present circumstances are very different: on the one hand the congregation cannot gather together to obey the dominical command to eat and drink, to 'do this' in remembrance of him, but on the other, they can gather together digitally – or at least, in many cases they can: some members of the congregation will not have the technology, but that should not constitute a fatal objection and it is not beyond our wit to devise some sort of provision for those who would otherwise be disenfranchised – indeed there seems to me to be a moral obligation to make provision for all who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

It is perfectly true that we are unable all to eat from the same bread and drink from the same cup, but we do not appear to be bothered by the use of individual wafers or by the use of more than one loaf when large numbers are involved, nor by the use of several chalices (even if some might balk at what seems normal practice to most Methodists, URC or Baptist worshippers, ie. the use of individual glasses).

The principal question, however, is whether what takes place in a virtual communion service is genuinely Holy Communion. The answer to that question will depend on considerations which turn on what is held to be the relationship between church, sacraments and ministry. There is no one view among the churches and no one view within the Church of England, so I shall set out my view, but am happy to engage with those who find my views unacceptable.

Let me begin with ministry. In my understanding priesthood is essentially about pastoral oversight. Priesthood emerges within the church and exists for the health and welfare of the church. If priesthood is concerned with pastoral oversight, it is appropriate and proper that presidency at the Eucharist should rest with the priest. But it is the entire congregation that are the celebrants: each has a part to play and the role of president is delegated to the priest, because he/she has been authorised to act in that role. The priest cannot act alone: there must be a congregation because it is an act of the church, exemplified in this congregation.

If we were to hold a virtual communion service, how would we know that it was valid? Well, aside from the fact that validity is a highly contested concept, we might explore the question of what might be the criteria for regarding this as a genuine Eucharist. If it is essential that it be presided over by someone in priest's orders, that criterion is met. If it is essential that an authorised Eucharistic prayer is used, there is no reason why that should not be met. If it is essential that a congregation be present, that is also met, albeit in virtual form. If it is essential that the intention should be to conduct and to share Holy Communion, that also is met. There seems, therefore, to be no obvious reason to dispute that what is taking place is indeed a service of Holy Communion. And at the end of the day the only guarantee of validity is God: it is God who consecrates the elements, God who is at work in the elements, God who goes with us as we separate.

That said, I would still want to insist that the practice is irregular – that is, it does not conform to the normal rules. But it does so for specific reasons. It is emergency provision for emergency circumstances and when those circumstances cease to apply, so does the emergency provision (and it is important to recognise that the emergency circumstances may continue for an indeterminate period).

By way of a codicil I might add the following:

May I, as a priest, celebrate solely for the members of my family/household? I would regard such a practice as a misuse of my priestly orders to give my household a privileged position. It is my view that every Eucharist should in principle be a public event, open for anyone to attend (but extreme persecution would constitute another set of special circumstances). That is because priesthood can never be separated from the church.

Michael Sansom

A Day in the Life of a retired clergyman

I duly presented myself at the Dental Hospital; I was scheduled to have a tooth extracted as, due to a previous unfortunate experience, I had been referred to the hospital. As I waited, I was overtaken by palpitations and strange physical sensations; ‘you are panicking’ said the voice beside me. I was called into the presence and sat in the chair; ‘why are you here’ said the dentist; I could not remember.

After that, all became a blur; I had the sensation of being whisked along many corridors until we came to rest in a small room where a young trainee doctor asked a number of questions and whether I could do certain things with my arms. Then came the violent pains in my upper arms and a feeling of nausea and then oblivion. I am told that medics arrived from different directions and I was calmly ‘rushed’ into another unit where I was worked upon for some time.

I woke up in the recovery room where I was informed that I had had a type two heart attack triggered by an E. coli infection in the internal regions which had the effect of depriving the heart of oxygen. ‘Whilst you are here’ said the doctor, ‘we should test you for Covid 19’; *as I had displayed no symptoms it seemed highly unlikely*; the test came back positive!

Then ensued eleven days in an isolation ward; ‘if it came to it, would you wish to be put onto a ventilator?’ I was asked at a stage; ‘no thanks’ I said, not really thinking too much about the consequences. As it turned out I was given some oxygen when breathlessness became a disturbing reality, but it went no further than that, lasting a few sleepless nights and some alarming thoughts regarding my mortality. People and parishioners were praying, I know, and the family was worrying; but praise God, after eleven days I came home to recuperate.

There was a persistent cough for several weeks and some permanent damage to the heart; but I am still here thanks to the skill and care I received in hospital, and am still receiving; there is no doubt, in my mind, that the expertise and presence of mind of the doctors and the carers in the hospital saved my life for which I am immensely grateful.

But there is also the thought that the Divine hand was at work preserving me; for what? Doubtless the ensuing months and years (hopefully) will reveal what He had in mind. In the meantime I am waiting for the next dental appointment.

Clive Harper

[Supporting Clergy Affected by Dementia - Julia Burton-Jones, Anna Chaplaincy Lead for Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses and Dementia Specialist \(julia.burton-jones@rochester.anglican.org\)](#)

In Rochester Diocese spiritual care for people living with dementia has taken the form of Anna Chaplaincy in recent years, aided by two generous grants from The Henry Smith Charity's Christian Projects programme. We have a growing team of Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends whose ministry involves spiritual care for older people, especially those living with dementia and their families. Some are ordained, the majority are lay ministers, and a large proportion are retirement age themselves. We have worked with churches across the Diocese to set up support groups for people with dementia and establish regular worship services aimed at those with memory problems, and care home ministry is central. We are now working with Canterbury Diocese to establish Anna Chaplaincy, with the first two Anna Chaplains commissioned in September 2019.

As part of our second Henry Smith grant, we requested funding to study the impact of dementia on clergy, having encountered many clergy in our early work whose lives were affected by the condition. This included clergy who were themselves living with dementia, but also those who were caring for a family member with the diagnosis. The first aim was to explore how a congregation and diocese might better support a priest who develops dementia in continuing in their ministry and then through the process of retiring. The second aim was to consider the needs of clergy who have caring responsibilities for a family member diagnosed with dementia who may live at some considerable distance (in the case of ageing parents).

If you would like to read my report – Keeping the Show on the Road: A Study of How Clergy are Affected by Dementia – do drop me an email. Information for the study was gathered through analysis of 38 completed questionnaires, follow-up phone interviews with 15 individuals, and research into national sources of information and support (including RCACOE). Many respondents were retired clergy.

The report is of interest to retired clergy for at two reasons: firstly because the likelihood of being diagnosed with dementia, or caring for a person with dementia, increases with age, so many will have first-hand experience; secondly, suggestions made by respondents included the potential for retired clergy to offer support for parishes, especially where a licensed member of the clergy receives a diagnosis.

Many parishes rely on their retired clergy with PTO to 'keep the show on the road', but what happens when signs of confusion and memory loss begin to emerge? Are congregations sufficiently dementia-aware to recognise the signs and respond sensitively and appropriately? Are there aspects of ordained ministry which might need to be relinquished sooner than others? There was a firm agreement among respondents that clergy should be supported and encouraged in continuing to minister, that this sends an important message about the value the Church places on those with memory problems, challenging societal assumptions, as well as preserving the identity and calling of the person with dementia. Leading familiar services with regular members might be possible well into the diagnosis, whereas tasks with legal ramifications, or with people from outside the church family, might prove more difficult.

Senior clergy who contributed to this project acknowledged that we currently lack supportive pathways for clergy diagnosed with dementia, so responses tend to be ad hoc. A key recommendation is to develop a roadmap, with protocols and guidance that adhere to best practice under equality law, for when a clergy person is diagnosed with dementia. A suggestion was made that recently retired priests, who often feel under-utilised, might be willing to take on a supportive role in 'holding' parishes going through transition following a diagnosis of dementia in their incumbent, while also offering pastoral care to the priest and their family at a time of considerable stress.

Alongside the needs of clergy who develop dementia is the twin issue of clergy caring for someone close to them who has dementia. In some respects, clergy experiences are not so different from others who care for a person with dementia, but there are some distinctive challenges. For those in licensed ministry, finding time and energy to care for an elderly parent with dementia who may live some distance away, for instance, is extremely difficult; having only one day off a week, and often carrying heavy demands in the parish, can leave the person feeling unable to fulfil responsibilities in either context in the way they would like. When caring for a spouse in retirement, we found some clergy with PTO are less networked into the diocese and so less well supported, particularly those who moved into a new diocese after retirement.

Many valuable suggestions emerged through the study and these will be considered at an upcoming meeting of the senior staff in Rochester Diocese, with our newly appointed bishop's adviser for retired clergy Jane Edwards playing a key part in developing responses. Simple strategies we might adopt are: including dementia specialists in the list of counsellors and therapists offered to our clergy; exploring opportunities for peer support for clergy caring for a person with dementia; warden training to cover supporting clergy who care for a parent living at a distance with dementia.

National representatives of the Pensions Board and Clergy Support trust are also keen to follow up on the study's findings, and we would be grateful for RCACOE members' help developing ideas and encouraging conversations on this important topic.

A retired member of the clergy with PTO told us: 'Caring for my wife who has dementia has reduced the time I have available for taking services and participating in church life. I now only take services in my local parish church and other churches which are close to home. I very rarely have time for reading.'

A clergy wife described how her husband developed dementia while in licensed ministry: 'My husband was diagnosed with early onset dementia and lived with it for 11 years. He was 64 when he passed away. During that period of his illness, I suffered with depression, loneliness and a sense of isolation. For me it was a very difficult time as a clergy wife. I took on a lot of responsibility in my church out of a sense of guilt, knowing that my husband was not up to things mentally. His condition was undiagnosed at this time and I had to put up with derogatory remarks about him.'

Ending on a positive note, an incumbent who completed the questionnaire said, of caring for her mum who had dementia: *'When Mum had a really bad turn (we thought she wouldn't survive) I*

needed time off, the retired clergy around me all stepped up and worked with the church wardens to keep everything running smoothly. The church wardens were awesome. The parish is very understanding. Sometimes things need cancelling last minute or someone else to step in to take it.'

I look forward to hearing from readers who have ideas and experiences to share that will contribute to better understanding how we can support clergy whose lives are affected by dementia.

The Church of England has a problem. Money.

The English public, if it thinks of the Church of England at all, still assumes it's phenomenally wealthy, and that the church receives funding from the state or from taxes. None of this is true. The effects of the pandemic and economic effects of a no deal Brexit will bring forward a crisis we might have been facing 15 years from now.

The church is at a crisis. The history of how it has come to this is long and complex involving mediaeval laws and customs, agricultural and land legislation, economic changes, societal and cultural changes, the impact of scientific endeavour, and more. But though the history is interesting, we must move on from where we are now.

Funds come from:

- A. personal giving by parishioners
- B. fees from weddings and funerals
- C. parish rental and investment income, if any; and
- D. subventions from the Church Commissioners whose funds are also dependent on rental and investment income.

As a result of lockdown, church closures and economic effects of government response to the virus:

- A. Giving has plummeted. Although some churchgoers give by standing order or direct debit, more do not, instead putting cash on the collection plate week by week—which of course has completely dried up. Most churchgoers are elderly and some know nothing of online banking.
- B. There are no occasional offices in church at present, and in any case they were in sharp decline before Covid.
- C. Church halls are shut, so there is no rental income. Income from residential and commercial property is significantly reduced. Investment income has been reduced by low interest rates, the 2008 financial crisis, and austerity.
- D. Central Church funds have taken a hit for similar reasons.

Funds from parishes, sources 1, 2 and 3, go to:

- 1. Pay, pension and continuing training for all clergy except bishops and cathedral deans.

2. Diocesan advisers, administrators and secretaries
3. Parsonages
4. Local mission
5. Churches, parish buildings and their maintenance

Funds from Commissioners, source 4, go to:

- Cathedrals
- Bishops
- National mission initiatives
- Central administration (Church House Westminster, Lambeth Palace), large and Byzantine.
- Subventions to dioceses to help plug the gap between what comes in from parishes and what goes out in pay and pensions. Such subventions do not close that gap.

Most dioceses are using reserves or are already bust.

- Liverpool furloughed some clergy.
- Sheffield even before Covid was aiming to reduce paid clergy numbers by almost a third in the next few years.
- Worcester has asked the public for donations to pay clergy.
- Chelmsford has told parishes if they can't stump up £60K annually, they won't get a paid parson.
- It's acknowledged or rumoured that Truro, Hereford, Sodor and Man, Blackburn, Manchester, Newcastle, Derby, Leicester, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, Southwark, Rochester, Portsmouth, and Guildford (Surrey of all places!) are at the edge or just tipping over. Others too possibly.
- One source who knows Carlisle diocese said that the only reason it isn't bust yet is because it doesn't spend anything.

Clergy pay and pensions - Consider these figures.

- 1 Archbishop of Canterbury £85,070
- 1 Archbishop of York £72,900
- 1 Bishop of London £66,820
- 39 other diocesan bishops £46,180
- About 60 suffragan (assistant) bishops £37,670

- 44 Deans £37,670
- About 100 Archdeacons £36,100
- Ordinary paid parsons £25,265 minimum (about 5000 I guess)

Although the typical parson receives an annual stipend of just over £25K, the cost to the parishes is about £60K since the parish share also funds the parson's pension and continuing training, parsonage maintenance, and diocesan staff such as mission advisers, safeguarding advisers, vocations advisers, and other advisers, administrators and secretaries. The church collects the money and passes it to the dioceses that then pay the clergy. Wealthy parishes that pay more than £60K in theory subsidise poor parishes that can't afford to. Some do. Other wealthy parishes resent giving their money to an organisation that they disapprove of and withhold what they are asked to pay as a form of blackmail.

Since income from parishioners (source 1) has now dried up, the Commissioners recently loaned the dioceses £75 million to tide them over the Covid crisis. Note: loaned. The pension is a significant call on funds, for it is a non-contributory defined benefit pension with a generous lump sum. Furthermore, for Archdeacons, Deans and Bishops, the pension enhancement that comes from their increased pay is backdated to the year of their entry into clerical orders—this could amount to 20 years' worth enhanced pension.

Pensions used to be the responsibility of the Commissioners, but in 1997, after the Commissioners had had their fingers burnt, they were passed to the dioceses, that is the parishes. Parish income having now collapsed, the Commissioners will have to pick up the cost, and this will leave a big hole in their assets—unless of course clergy pay and pensions were to be slashed.

Sources 1, 2 and 3 also fund the building. Think ancient, damp, roof, structure, stained glass, organs, plumbing, electrics, heating, and more. Think of a building the size of a small cathedral, often to be found in inner city deprived areas, sustained by a regular congregation of say 25 people all over the age of 60.

Remember that the majority of congregations are numerically tiny, elderly, and on pensions. As a result of the lockdown they have lost the habit of weekly attendance. Lost habits are hard to re-establish. Will they want to return given the anxiety that will persist about catching the virus? How many will still be alive next year? Another issue is that many churchgoers have loyalty not to Christianity, nor to the parson, but to the building and, in rural areas, to the graveyard where they wish to be buried with their ancestors.

Why would these people continue to give to church funds if they've stopped attending? And it's unwise to put any faith in online worship: it brings in no money, it requires web access and equipment, it is yet another task, and it is questionable how well supported it will be when people are able to resume "normal" activities.

Church Commissioners The Commissioners fund cathedrals, bishops, central administration, training institutions and mission initiatives. In 1997 their assets were about £2.5 billion. After they stopped funding clergy pensions, assets grew to about £8 billion. As I said earlier, that's being eaten into as I write: property prices and rental incomes are slashed, markets are depressed, and with working from home here to stay, rent from commercial property is in short supply. And now they will have to take back most or all the pensions burden.

So far, then:

- Parishes are in the red and reserves are being gobbled up.
- Dioceses are in the red and reserves are being gobbled up.
- The £75 million loaned to the dioceses some weeks ago won't last long – it may already have run out. How can dioceses be expected to pay back this loan?
- Prospects are gloomy.

You can see why there's a money problem. And I hope you can see that the biggest drain on funds is clergy pay and pensions.

What to do? Closing and selling off churches has been suggested.

Who wants them? Few are amenable to other uses. They wouldn't raise much cash given present property prices, and once a church is sold, it's sold.

If they are sold, the heritage brigade will be up in arms: *national heritage, part of the landscape, belong to the community, the people's patrimony* – all this they will cry. Morally, selling them to fund the religious activity of a dwindling sect is questionable since the buildings over the centuries were largely funded from taxation or levies and so can indeed be said to belong to the people.

Most significant of all, many—most—people are emotionally and atavistically attached to churches whether they attend or not: churches are community temples and memory deposits; they are often focal points of community cohesion. People care about churches and graveyards, but they don't care about a resident parson. To them, buildings matter more than clergy or doctrine. Many clergy, and I suspect bishops too, find this difficult to stomach: they regard churches as inconvenient and expensive money pits and would rather worship in a warm industrial unit.

If churches were to be closed and/or sold, how would decisions be made and by whom? Many of the poorest churches are in the most deprived areas—the very areas where the churches do the most valuable work. Will the well-scrubbed and well-heeled of leafy suburbia be happy to see their money going to inner-city parishes?

In summary, selling off churches would be a once-off; it wouldn't raise much; and it would be hugely unpopular with a substantial and vocal section of the public. It would, truly, strike at the nature of the culture we have inherited.

So how about reducing pay and pension costs?

- Since all clergy will in future have to be paid by the Commissioners, change the whole basis. Abolish all differentials. Pay all clergy the same, bishops the same as parsons, and reimburse expenses in full according to the nature of the work.
- Restructure the pension scheme to be more in line with almost every other: contributory, DC, realistic lump sum.

Cull paid clergy

- Reduce numbers by at least two thirds, those remaining being sited strategically in accordance with population or geographical factors. Most churches could be served by unpaid clergy living locally, selected by local agreement.
- Stop – now – recruitment to paid posts. A few years ago there was a national drive to recruit more young people to the ranks of stipendiary clergy. This was immoral then, and is much more so now. There is no way that the church will be able to fund them for say 40 years, let alone provide a pension.
- All other paid clergy to take early retirement, packages funded by the Commissioners.
- Ordain non-stipendiary ministers as required on the basis of local recommendation, and after rigorous training.

But: do turkeys vote for Christmas?

Administrative costs Within one hour by road of where I sit there are five, maybe six diocesan offices, finance departments, safeguarding teams, mission teams ... and so on. So:

- Merge all 42 diocesan administrations into one central body, sited in the midlands or the north. Think of the likely savings and increased efficiency.
- Dioceses should retain only pastoral functions.
- Ordained diocesan staff now surplus to requirements should serve in parishes or use their skills in other careers.

Buildings Bishops don't need cathedrals (Lutheran style), so cathedrals to become merely churches with historic titles only (Presbyterian Church of Scotland). Deans, chapters, residentiary canonries to be abolished. Musical and other mission activities could – should – survive, appropriately funded.

- Fabric and maintenance of large churches and “cathedrals” to be funded centrally, perhaps with the introduction of a voluntary church tax (continental style) to support only the fabric (but not the activities within). Maybe HMRC would deal with this. Or perhaps, French style, fabric could become the responsibility of the state given the payment by the Commissioners of a suitable dowry. Unfortunately, available funds are unlikely to be adequate, and the economic and political circumstances are far from propitious.
- All other churches to be run by unpaid clergy and/or lay ministers living in their own homes.
- There are too many churches, especially in towns, so churches could be offered to local communities. Unwanted churches should be abandoned or demolished.
- Sell all parsonages no longer required.

Bishops and dioceses Some say we need fewer, some say we need more.

- Option 1: reduce the number of dioceses and diocesan bishops from 42 to about 17, and the number of suffragans from about 60 to 16 or so, suggested * below, on the basis of population and/or area and communications.
 - Durham, Newcastle *
 - Carlisle, Blackburn, Sodor & Man *
 - Liverpool, Manchester, Chester *
 - Lichfield, Coventry, Birmingham *
 - Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester
 - Bristol, Bath and Wells, Salisbury *
 - Exeter, Truro *
 - Winchester, Portsmouth, Guildford, Chichester*
 - London **
 - Southwark, Rochester, Canterbury *
 - Norwich, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich *
 - Ely, St Albans
 - Oxford *
 - Peterborough, Leicester *
 - Lincoln *
 - Leeds , York*
 - Sheffield, Southwell. Derby *

This would run the risk of fewer bishops feeling more important with a regrettable further increase in clericalism.

- Option 2:
 - Increase the number of dioceses and bishops from 42 to about 150 – maybe each deanery as at present becoming a “diocese” (do we need the title?).
 - No suffragan bishops needed, nor Archdeacons or Deans since a cathedral is now no more than a church with a history.

- No fancy titles. No House of Lords. No pay differentials. No purple shirts. No clericalism. No establishment. Perhaps these “bishops” would be the only paid clergy.
- Increase the number of unpaid clergy. Ordain on the basis of local recommendation and need.

Training A difficult business, especially given the shortage of funds. At present there are nine residential institutions and a multiplicity of local part time courses. Some clergy are trained for three years full time, others for two years part time with a few residential weekends. There is no agreed national curriculum. Some students are grounded in New Testament Greek, some are not. Some are fed the arcane enthusiasms of course staff.

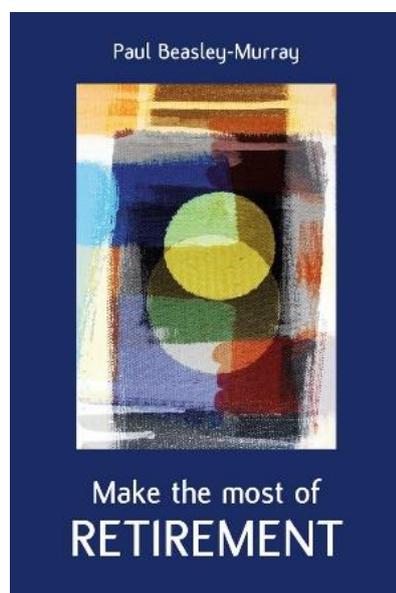
I don't know what the future of training will be, but online learning and e-resources are essential. We don't need so many training institutions, but we *do* need:

- Standardisation with agreed curriculum
- Academic rigour.
- Intelligent study of Scripture.
- Instruction in basic liturgical history and praxis.
- Instruction in church history.
- Extensive e-resources in the widest possible sense.

And finally ... This is a great opportunity for radical action. The church does not need a sticking plaster, but rather a scalpel wielded mercilessly to drain the abscesses. “I came not to send peace, but a sword.” *Stanley Monkhouse and others*

Making the Most of Retirement.

Paul Beasley-Murray, Bible Reading Fellowship (2020), 9 780857 468642, pbk 144pp, £8.99



Paul is a retired Baptist minister and probably familiar to many as the Beasley Murray family (father & son) have been prominent in Baptist circles for many years. However, his non-Anglican background should not dissuade any reader as after retiring as senior minister of Central Baptist Church Chelmsford he decided to join the congregation of Chelmsford Cathedral. In fact, he has produced a paper on why retired Baptist ministers end up worshipping with the Church of England. I look forward to a similar one, from somebody, as to why so many retired C of E priests become Quakers!

This is a slim book, easily read and with a light style. Divided into four sections (Beginning a new journey, Finding a new purpose, Living a full life, Preparing for the final journey) each of which has seven or eight sections it reads rather like a set of notes to

accompany a series of compline addresses or the like. Each one can be read in its own right.

The book takes issue with the idea that retirement is the waiting room for death, a final destination that all arrive at. Rather he sees retirement as the terminus from which you set off on a new journey “it is the beginning of a new journey . . .it opens up new vista, it is the gateway to eternity” (quoting “Terminus”, a poem by David Adam.

The book has its origins in a research project to discover how ministers (and he carefully uses this term throughout as the most inclusive) experience retirement; published in his book “Retirement Matters for Ministers”. Here he discovered that while many retired ministers were glad to be retired and were experiencing new opportunities a significant proportion felt discarded, undervalued, and reduced in their opportunities in life.

For the former category this book will provide new idea and suggestions as to how to live an even fuller life. Each section is formed round a particular biblical text and is full of examples and illustrations. The book is, in itself, a resource of sermon illustrations! For the latter category there are many challenges. It is not a mere exercise in positive thinking for the retired, but wise godly advice and biblical insights to enable growth. It is also very well referenced so you can chase up his quotes if you wish.

Old age used to be thought of as starting with retirement, 65 as it used to be for men, 60 for women. The government has changed all that (to many women’s disadvantage) to 66 for all. But that is not how we think. From October 2011 there is no mandatory retirement age, and except for the CofE retirement cannot be imposed by employers. It has been said that 70 is the new 60; most of us have many more expectations of active life post retirement. The Church of England is lagging behind here. I asked a question in General Synod in 2015 as to what progress there was in changing clergy retirement rules. The reply was that the house of bishops was unaware of any groundswell of opinion: they cannot be so unaware now. In terms of ministry, at least as an incumbent or senior cleric, there is good case for handing on a post by 70 and ministering in some other way. For most of us, that will involve PTO (Permission to Officiate). Progress is being made it terms of positive engagement with the retired, but there is a long way to go. It is demeaning and insulting to make assumptions on behalf of the retired ‘in their best interests’ without consultation. The largest number of active retired clergy in England are in their 80s, a large pool of voluntary ministry.

Retirement is something of a shock to many clergy, we are psychologically unprepared: you go suddenly from being in the centre of everything, consulted, listened to, kept in touch (and how much more so for senior clergy). Then the next day it can seem as if you have been pushed off a cliff and no longer exist. In one chapter he explores the issue of clerical identity; how so often it is centred in our functions rather than who we are in Christ. He quotes approvingly Archbishop Justin Welby, who discovered greatly to his surprise recently that his biological father was not the man he called father but another. This is a discovery which could easily strike to the roots of one’s sense of identity and worth, yet Justin Welby said ‘I know that I find who I am in Jesus Christ, not in genetics, and my identity in him never changes’.

There is much that can be done to prepare for retirement. Most dioceses offer some form of pre-retirement course, but it is often very sketchy and can sometimes do little more than cover the administrative bones of the various options on retirement housing and how will you be paid. This book, in itself, read through perhaps with a small group reaching retirement at similar points will

provide a much richer fare. Involving others (and of course partners) will give added perspectives: not everyone's retirement is the same. Beasley-Murray encourages using a mentor or soul friend. This could also be described as a work consultant for the retired. We may not realise it, but we are now on our own. We don't automatically have to report to anyone, we can do our own thing. But we've not done this before and we know that in starting in ministry there were various people to help and advise: there were also groups where you could moan about how bad the vicar was – and discover fellow sufferers! I believe every diocese has a Retirement Officer, but how much of a voice they have varies widely and, in some cases, very little seems to be done.

We will not be long retired before friends and colleagues start dying (if they have not already) and thoughts of our own mortality become more common. How will we meet it, will we 'die well'? In his penultimate chapter, 'Letting go and holding on' Beasley-Murray paints a picture of death as not only 'going' but also 'arriving'; this is what the Christian should hope for, while acknowledging that the reality is not always like that. Many of us fear the process of dying, fear not just the pain and loss of bodily functions but also the loss of the mind and the personality changes that can come with dementia. There could – perhaps should – have been a reminder here to discuss an end of life plan with family members and how you can ensure that those caring for you at the end are aware of it. This could be part of a small portfolio of preparation. Not just ensuring a will is written, charitable gifts assigned, but also what sort of funeral you would like (always remembering the funeral is mainly for the benefit of those left behind!) as it will both make a statement about your deepest belief and also be a personal growth experience. Who do you most want to be with you as you die?

A H Clough's famous doublet "Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive officiously to keep alive is not only a palliative care dictum; it is also a spiritual one. Beasley-Murray quotes cases of three experienced charismatic Christian leaders who were convinced they would be miraculously healed: in one case it ended badly, the other two 'came to the reluctant and dislocating conclusion that' somehow, they had got it wrong, but were able, peacefully, to let go into the hands of the God they didn't now understand'.

This is, I have found, a book that repays reading – and then reading again (it's very short!); there is much wisdom here. Beasley-Murray's experience is summed up, he writes, in David Adam's poem 'The Terminus':

*The Terminus is not where we stay,
It is the beginning of a new journey.
It is where we reach out beyond,
Where we experience new adventures.
It is where we get off to enter new territory,
To explore new horizons, to extend our whole being.
It is a place touching the future.
It opens up new vistas.
It is the gateway to eternity.*

Mike Parsons

**Please send items for the next Newsletter to Malcolm Liles at
malcolm.liles48@gmail.com before the end of November**

2020

Vacancies for membership of the RCACoE National Council

RCACoE is served by a Council of 12 members (plus the Chairman and the Secretary/Treasurer) each representing a group of dioceses. We currently have 2 vacancies for members to represent the Dioceses of:

London and Southwark

Birmingham, Hereford, Lichfield, and Worcester

Council members become Trustees of the RCACoE 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, although currently our meetings are virtual. 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 2020 2016 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.

Malcolm Liles

Newsletter circulation

As you will know our newsletter is now mainly distributed by e-mail which gives us a considerable saving. However, we can send out hard copies to those who need to receive it in that format. There are currently 82 distributed to members who have let me know that they wish to receive hard copies. If you know of any members who are now missing out on this mode of delivery could you please encourage them to write to me requesting a postal copy.

Malcolm Liles

Facebook Group Page?

To judge by the response to the note in the last newsletter the answer is no, for whilst there was an offer to moderate such a list it was the only response so unless a deluge of positive responses arrives after this newsletter it will dropout as an item.

Malcolm Liles

[Safeguarding C2 Leadership](#)

Many of us will have taken part in this module before the pandemic, since then it has changed somewhat in order to be delivered virtually by Zoom. It is a stop-gap course for times of Zoom, but is very poorly thought out in terms of anyone other than an incumbent (which is the perspective of the questions). It requires four 250/350 word reflections to specific questions after reading a number of on-line resources to be submitted before the Zoom session. A week later there is a follow up after a meditation on Psalm 91 and watching the BBC programme that exposed the dreadful Peter Ball disaster. It then asks for three pieces of 360 feedback on 'how has this changed you'.

Curates, PTOs and Readers will have to do this if their update falls due. This is, I'm told, transitional and a new face-to-face seminar based course will come when the Zoom era is over.

Several members have felt that this module is too demanding for those of us who do not have continuous responsibility for churches and congregations, and given up their PTO as a result.

Our Chairman has written to the President, Andrew Watson, asking that the House of Bishops reflect on this issue and its effects on those who have served the church for many years. One member described it in these terms "Basically the issue is the "one size fits all" approach; as if all drivers had to qualify as PSV, HGV and police high speed pursuit drivers to potter about on social and domestic matters."

If members wish to have further information before they undertake the course they are welcome to contact me and I will offer helpful advice on how to approach it. *Malcolm Liles*

[Clergy Discipline Measure](#)

It looks as if this ill-conceived measure will soon have run its course, after sterling research work by the Society of Mary and Martha and considered reflection by a group chaired by the Bishop at Lambeth on 8th July **the House of Bishops unanimously supported Bishop Tim Thornton's motion to work towards complete replacement of the CDM**. This is a very significant milestone on the journey of restoring humanity to clergy discipline. And it can't come soon enough. Of course General Synod will need to examine its replacement with a good deal more attention than was given to CDM in 2003.

[Pensions Board Consultation](#)

Most of you will have received a letter about this from the Board, the consultation closes on 31 August, please do what you can to respond to the Board's proposals before that date.

www.rcacoe.org

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Please note that views expressed in this newsletter are those the authors and should not be understood as in any way reflecting the position of RCACoE