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**Christmas
Newsletter
2020**

from the chair

- **Advent/Christmas 2020**

Dear Friends,

One of the problems that the recent lockdown has brought for me is that I have found it increasingly difficult to gain some sort of perspective for the future. All national effort seems, as I write to you now in late November, to be focussed on allowing Christmas celebrations in a few weeks in as much a normal way as possible. Whatever normal might mean! Without wanting to appear too Scrooge-, might not a pared down Christmas be such a bad thing? There is so much materialism and secular celebration of our “Midwinter Fest” that has its entire focus on 25th December as the end of the celebration. For us as Christians it is just the beginning.

What will the New Year bring? A country trying to come to terms with a Brexit that no one seems to know what will happen. A promise of mass vaccination at some point over the spring and summer. Well yes, and thank God for the marvellous work that has been done so quickly to find an effective vaccine. But I believe that the nations of the world, our own country, our Church, will surely need to take stock and try to learn from what has happened. There seem to me to be some profound theological questions that should be visited: What does it mean to be human and live in community? What does it mean to ask God to “deliver us from this plague”? Is it possible for governments to be genuinely caring and compassionate towards the people they serve? Which in turn raises the questions of allocation of resources, taxation and priorities... All rather heavy I hear you say. Yet our hope and trust in the meaning of incarnate love shown in the birth of our Saviour must not allow us to escape into some fairy tale version of the Nativity story. It all came at some cost. And it was all for our sake.

***O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in:
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.***

Whatever form of celebration our Christmas takes, may it be a peaceful, joyful and happy one.

+lan

Book Review Dominion – The Making of the Western Mind by Tom Holland (Abacus £10.99)

Being a bit of a classical buff I enjoyed reading Tom Holland’s book “*Dynasty*” on the rise and fall of the house of Caesar, so it was with a similar expectation that I waded my way through the 600 pages of *Dominion*. The fact that The Sunday Times was proclaiming it as its bestseller perhaps should have served as a warning, but I can’t help feeling a sense of disappointment when I reached the end and I find it difficult to pin down exactly why. Holland paints with a very broad brush as he reaches across the ages from Ancient Greece through New Testament times to the 21st century painting a picture of the pervading

influence of Christianity on Western thought, culture, ethics and attitudes. One has to admire the erudition and sweep of historical knowledge and relatively accessible way he puts it all together. Perhaps that's the problem for me. It all seems a little too simplistic. I constantly wanted to say "Yes, but ..." especially when he reached the 20th century. I wonder whether we find treating events and times we have actually lived through ourselves as "history" and their interpretation as more difficult. We each tend to have our own opinions on the times we have lived through. And if that is the case, then what of the opinions of those who lived contemporaneously with the other ages described? Obviously Holland is making his case and in many ways quite attractively, but I just wonder whether this is a bit "popular history". Perhaps there is nothing wrong with that given the popular appeal of the interminable number of TV series on Tudor Kings and Queens, but that is more about entertainment perhaps...? I would be very happy to hear from those who disagree with me. It would be interesting if Holland were now to produce a book on Byzantium and its influence across Eastern Europe and Russia.

Ian Brackley

***Just John by David Wilbourne* ISBN 978-0-281-05828-0** This is the authorised biography of Lord Habgood, Archbishop of York 1983-95. The author is particularly well-qualified for the task having served as the Archbishop's Chaplain for four years (1991-95), and as an incumbent in his diocese.

The historical narrative is suffused with personal recollections and anecdotes, which combine to make a perceptive and compelling read. John Habgood was born in 1927 and died in 2017. After Eton and Kings College, Cambridge an outstanding scientific career beckoned for he possessed one of the most brilliant intellects in the UK. By way of illustration Wilbourne quotes an occasion when as Chaplain to the Archbishop he was carrying the primatial cross in procession at a church service. He collided with a low arch and clonked a sanctuary lamp which swung like a pendulum for the rest of the service. He apologised afterwards for his clumsiness to which the Archbishop replied – "Think nothing of it. I was fascinated how regular the swing was and calculated the acceleration due to gravity while the Vicar was boring the rest of the congregation with the notices" – and this was forty years after he had ceased his mathematical studies. The church was to make full use of his talents in such matters as medical ethics, human fertilisation, the interface between science and religion, and the place of Christianity in the modern world.

As an undergraduate John Habgood experienced an evangelical conversion and felt the call to ordination. After Cuddesdon, a curacy in Kensington followed, and two years later he became Vice-Principal of Westcott House, succeeding Robert Runcie. It was the electric era of South Bank religion. Ecumenical and liturgical concerns loomed large in his interests at this time. He practised these at a local level in the parish of Jedburgh – which led to his appointment as Principal of Queen's College, Birmingham in 1967; it rapidly united with Handsworth (Methodist) Theological College to become England's first ecumenical theological college.

Wilbourne's narrative goes on to relate how John became Bishop of Durham at the age of 46, which led to his involvement internationally in the wider councils of the Church and his role in liturgical revision resulting in the publication of the Alternative Service Book in 1980.

Although he could give the impression of being cold and distant, Habgood retorted to criticism of his prolonged silences by remarking that "reticence is not a vice". He did, however, enjoy a whirlwind romance. He met Rosalie Boston, a distinguished music teacher in Cambridge and two months later after their third meeting they became engaged, marrying in 1961. Wilbourne relates how on the first night of their honeymoon, "John knelt by the side of the bed to say his prayers whilst Rosalie shimmered beneath the sheets. After half an hour's prayer she began to wonder whether she had married a saint and deftly kicked her new husband. "So sorry, Rosalie", her beau apologised, "I was so tired, I fell asleep".

The church had to endure some stormy periods on his watch – the miners' strike and the Thatcher years. David Jenkins in 1984, his successor at Durham, Gary Bennet and the Crockford preface drama, and controversy over the ordination of women as priests, (conspicuously in his own household, where Rosalie was vehemently opposed).

John and Rosalie enjoyed a long and happy retirement in the attractive market town of Malton before each succumbed in turn to dementia. This book has been described as a sensitive, insightful and loving portrait

of a great Archbishop of York and the best Archbishop of Canterbury we never had. In David Wilbourne is a biographer who has done him justice.

Paul Conder

Lockdown and all that goes with has had many effects on many of us. For me one advantageous effect has been that I have searched through my bookshelves and read a lot of those books which I bought in such good faith, which then littered my desk for a week or three, and then got put on the shelves and were effectively forgotten. Some of them have been a revelation and some I have no idea now why I parted with the money for them and they have been consigned to the box for the charity shop. Two books which surprised me I would like to share with you. Neither of them are newly published but they both make for good reading albeit for very different reasons.

[The Bible for Grown-Ups; A New Look at the Good Book](#) *Simon Loveday* Icon Books 2016

ISBN 978-178578-263-3 Loveday paints on a very large canvas – this is not a book for those of you who like detailed analysis. He paints a very large picture and it is a picture filled with ideas that gets your brain saying to itself - ‘I didn’t know that, no one ever told me that, I never realised that.....’

Those words came into my head as I was reading it. Loveday is a writer who neither requires nor rejects belief. He sets out to help ‘grown ups’ make sense of the Bible, realising that it is too large to swallow wholesale, yet far too important in our faith, history and culture to pass over without some sense of understanding. He asks questions – which, as David Jenkins, a former Bishop of Durham once remarked – are far more interesting than answers. Loveday asks questions which open doors to our thinking and perhaps re-thinking – e.g. why do the creation stories contradict each other? Why is Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth so different to Luke’s? Why was St. Paul so rude about St Peter? And many, many more, Loveday reminds us that each Biblical writer wrote for their own time and out of their own experience. In short, he claims, and I agree with him, nothing in the Bible is quite what it seems and we all fall into the trap of taking too much of the Bible for granted.

I learnt a lot from this book about themes and ideas about which I thought I already knew a great deal. It is a book that surprised me, delighted me, and infuriated me. I am very glad that I found it lurking on my shelves. It made some of the dreary lock-down days remarkably entertaining

[The Bible in Western Culture; the Student’s Guide](#) *Dee Dyas and Esther Hughes*

Routledge 2005 ISBN 0-415-32618-4 Despite its age this is not a book to ignore. You may not think it is for you but only for those youngsters just starting out on their adult learning life. But we are quickly reminded that we are all students whatever age we may be. It is a resource book. A book that places the Bible into the midst of the great wealth of European history, knowledge and ‘culture’. It is a book that makes us stand back and see the Bible in its context for us in the wide European history of the Christian Faith. It is a book that introduces those who do not know this library of writing to the main themes, characters, and events.

For those who have had our noses stuck in the Bible for many years it makes us pause and be re-introduced to those overarching themes, fascinating characters and events. This is book that opens doors and invites you to explore such themes etc. either for the first time or anew. I discovered much I never knew, much I had forgotten, much I should have known, much I regret never having realised, much really I should have been taught or learnt before now.

Despite our departing from Europe at the beginning of 2021 we are still a ‘European’ nation for we are part and parcel of both the creation and result of the history and culture of Europe. We may not be thinking of travelling far this year but this book will open up many doors to set our thoughts and imaginations travelling. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I didn’t agree with some of the over-generalised conclusions which seemed a tad too simplistic, but I enjoyed it and I think you will to. It was easy to find on ebay.

Christopher Wardale. (Diocese of Newcastle)

[Hostage in Haridwar](#) We flew to India on 9th March, 2020. With hindsight it is easy to say we shouldn’t have gone, but at the time the advice was to carry on as normal. Apart from a brief health declaration there were no formalities on arrival and we began our holiday driven around Amritsar by Arjun a friendly

tuk-tuk driver who took us home to meet his family. They and their neighbours gave us a warm welcome and after refreshments we spent some time taking photographs. We continued by car, with our driver Samarpreet, into the Himalayan foothills to Dharamsala (home of the Dalai Lama) and Shimla, a former British Hill Station.

By the time we reached Chandigarh we read that a lockdown was beginning back home. Some sights in India were now also closed, but we continued to an overnight stop in Haridwar, where we were told that they had to summon a medical team to assess us. They took our temperatures and asked a few questions, then said we were free to go. The following day (Sunday) was to be a trial lockdown with all travel forbidden, so we took the decision to abandon our holiday and head for Delhi as our airline had a flight in the early hours which we hoped we might catch.

About half-way there our driver received a phone call instructing him to return us to Haridwar. He argued but they threatened that if we carried on we would be stopped by the police and he would be arrested. So, we set off on a nearly three-hour journey back to a guest house that the Indian government had taken over as a quarantine centre, arriving about 10.00pm, where we were greeted by two armed policemen, one of whom was quite aggressive. We were taken to a room and they tried to lock us in, but we managed to get hold of the key before they could. That first night caused much anxiety, but we did get some sleep as we were exhausted.

On Sunday morning a doctor came to see us and explained that we must remain in quarantine in our room until we had been in India 14 days. The room was basic with hard beds and poor water pressure, and meals were left on a table outside as no one would come in, and we then had to put the rubbish into black refuse sacks which remained outside our room as no one would collect them. We had no adapter to fit the plugs to charge our phones and iPads (which contained our books), and the Indian SIM we had in one of our phones had run out of credit so we could only make local calls. There was WiFi but it was weak and extremely slow. Downloading emails was possible, but anything like streaming music was a non-starter.

On Wednesday we were given a Certificate that we had completed our quarantine and were symptom free, we were told that we could now walk in the grounds, which were reasonably spacious, and at the front well-kept with beds of colourful flowers. At the end of the drive were armed guards ready to tackle us if we decided to try and escape. One day was brightened by the arrival of a kingfisher to investigate a water filled trough in the grounds, while on another day we discovered a goat's leg and a dead snake.

We felt we should try to give some structure to our day with two walks, an episode of *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue* (which I had on my phone) and even a Bible study on Revelation. Along with daily prayer, Sunday Mass together, and messages and prayers from family and friends, we managed to keep ourselves sane. We borrowed an adapter from one of the staff enabling us to charge things up, and Shubum, who spoke reasonable English, helped us top up our SIM enabling us to make international calls again.

We felt we must try to move to a hotel near Delhi airport, since stuck here we would be unable to take a flight should one become available, but India was now in total lockdown, and we were unable to travel. The British High Commission Facebook page assured us they were working to get British subjects home and we sent in a form by email with our details. On the Thursday the doctor said she could arrange a taxi with a pass to take us to Delhi, but it never materialised and the following day someone more senior told us that no such pass was available.

By Friday (the day we were originally going home) we were getting short of medication, so we texted the doctor and she said she would arrange it, and the following day it appeared. We were also getting short of clean clothes, so some washing needed to be done. On Saturday we were invited to go down to the dining room for lunch where we were joined by a young French couple, who were the only others there. They told us that their Embassy had arranged transport the following day to take their nationals to Delhi, and had arranged two flights to Paris. They asked if we might join the coach and this was agreed.

We had had too many disappointments by now and hardly dared believe that we might be making progress, but on Sunday morning a taxi took us to the rendezvous where a fleet of 4 coaches transferred us to a hotel at Delhi airport where they had even negotiated preferential rates. Meals were still on a tray in our room as restaurants were closed, but we were allowed to come and go as we pleased and could walk

on the roads around the hotels complex, which were lined with well-maintained flower beds and deserted of traffic.

We asked about a place on one of the French flights, but we needed permission from our High Commission and it was impossible to get through to them on the phone. Then on Wednesday a couple of coach loads of Finns arrived at the hotel and told us they had a flight home the following day, and if there were spaces they could be booked on the Finnair website. Not only were there seats, but we could also book a connecting flight to London which meant we would only transit in Helsinki and never officially enter Finland in case they had any quarantine rules. We felt we must take this chance so we booked it, and early the next morning set off for Helsinki. On arrival there was what seemed a slightly redundant announcement asking us to respect social distancing in the airport; this after spending 7½ hours crammed in a completely packed plane! Our flight to London departed an hour and a half later and a family member came to Heathrow to pick us up. We arrived home, tired, but relieved, nearly 24 hours after leaving our hotel that morning. One problem remained, that our car was at Manchester airport to which we had intended to return, but another family member took me across to pick it up.

We got home before they organised their first rescue flight. Yet how hard can this be? On the news we saw hundreds of planes standing idle at our airports, their crew furloughed and paid by the government, yet they seemingly could not organise any of them to fly to India to rescue British people. It isn't as if these flights are charity – we had to pay for our tickets at a higher price than we had paid for our original flights – and the planes were guaranteed to be full and thus presumably a useful earner for our government and the airlines involved. In some ways we were fortunate, being in the right place at the right time and we seized our chances when they were offered to us, but despite the High Commission 'working day and night' to get us home there were still Britons stranded in India over two months after lockdown began.

Of course, we returned home to our own lockdown, but at home you do have your familiar things around you, and you move around the house doing things as well as being able to get out for walks in the area. As I write this some 7 months after our return, we are still fighting to get a refund of our return flight from our Travel Agent, and redress for further losses from either our Travel Insurance or our credit card. In all we are probably some £2,000 out of pocket on the experience (leaving aside the more or less cancelled holiday), but everyone goes on blaming coronavirus for these seemingly interminable delays.

Bruce & Jan Carlin

[Clergy Support Trust reaches 365 years](#) 365 years old, the Clergy Support Trust (formerly Sons & Friends of the Clergy) should have retired many times over. Although our new name is still in its infancy, turning two next March, our aim is still the same: to support Anglican clergy and their families, from training through retirement. We cover the UK and Ireland (the Church in Wales, Scottish Episcopal Church, Church of England and Church of Ireland). So far this year we have helped 1,258 clergy households (an increase of 39% compared to 2019), including serving clergy, retired clergy, ordinands, former partners/spouses and widow(er)s. Our grants are available throughout the year, in times of need. We have a long history of supporting clergy at the end of their ministry, and those who have retired, as well as their spouses or partners; most of our grants are available to retired as well as serving clergy.

We expect all applicants who own property to have less than £16k in savings before making an application. A simple eligibility checker is available on our website <https://www.clergysupport.org.uk/form/eligibility>

Types of grants available include:

[Emergency Grants](#) – smaller grants (up to £500), non-means tested, available twice a year when unexpected costs arise. These include car-related costs, household appliances, gardening or heating costs if living with a registered disability, moving costs, technology including laptops, transport and travel costs in relation to attending health appointments or in cases of emergency.

[Wellbeing Grants](#) – designed to promote good mental and physical health, available once every 12 months. Applicants may choose from one of the following (per annual application): a contribution towards a holiday, days out, cost towards respite breaks if caring for a loved one, fitness and leisure activities (including gym memberships, fitness equipment, bicycles).

[Financial Support Grants](#) – available once every 12 months for those in the most severe financial hardship. All financial support grants are means-tested and can be used towards general living expenses. Please contact our grants team before applying, to see if you are likely to qualify.

[Health Grants](#) – available for when some treatments or equipment are unavailable on the NHS or via statutory services (or, in some cases, if waiting times are deemed unreasonable). We are unable to consider grants towards the cost of operations or surgery. We can help with assistive technologies, minor diagnostic tests, mobility aids and equipment, rehabilitation post-op or physical therapy, talking therapies and in some cases, top-up care-home fees. Speak to a grants officer or check your eligibility before applying.

In addition to our grants, we are also expanding our range of specialist support through working in partnership with other organisations. These include:

- Occupational Therapy assessments through **The OT Practice**, as part of an application toward mobility aids or equipment.
- Signposting for debt consolidation support through **Churches Mutual Credit Union (CMCU)** or debt advice via **StepChange Debt Charity**.
- Piloting online help and support for those suffering from insomnia or poor quality sleep through **Sleepstation** (full launch in March 2021).
- The eBook online library for ordinands and curates, in partnership with **SPCK/IVP**.

We continue to consider the needs of all our beneficiary groups and hope to develop more partnerships in the future. However, our grants offering remains at the core of how we help. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to operate at full capacity (we have even grown our team) and have adapted our programmes and grants in response to the changing needs of clergy and their families. As we move into 2021, we are eager to continuing supporting retired clergy as a key part of our ministry, and to engage ever more closely with the RCA to ensure that we are meeting the needs of its members. Please do get in touch with our new CEO, Ben Cahill-Nicholls, with any ideas on how this might happen.

You can apply for a grant directly by visiting www.clergysupport.org.uk. Do complete the eligibility checker first, to see the range of grants available to you. Alternatively, please contact the grants team on grants@clergysupport.org.uk or call 0800 389 5192. If you prefer, we can post a paper application to you.

Please do consider telling a retired clergy colleague or widow(er) about us, if they are in need.

Why did you change your name?

The charity was founded in 1655, in response to destitute clergy during the time of Oliver Cromwell, as The Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy. The first fundraiser was our annual Festival Service at St Paul's Cathedral and dinner at Merchant Taylors' Hall.

A royal charter granted by Charles II in 1678 created our official name: Governors of the charity for relief of the poor widows and children of clergymen. Subsequent amalgamations of six charities resulted in The Corporation of Sons of the Clergy and Friends of the Clergy Corporation forming a common trustee board in 2005, merging in 2012 to form Sons & Friends of the Clergy.

However, we started to hear that the very people for which the charity was originally founded – widows and daughters of clergy specifically – felt they couldn't apply because they were not a 'son of the clergy'. So we began a consultation process, which included in-depth interviews and over 1,200 responses to a public survey, to determine if a change was needed and what it should be.

Clergy Support Trust was unanimously approved by the Trustees as not just a name but reflective of the revised grants and increasingly relational approach. Thank you to those who were a part of that change, which has resulted in a significant increase in applications from a wider range of beneficiaries. In fact, we have already achieved our 2022 goal of doubling the number of people we support from 2018. A comment we receive regularly is "the name does what it says on the tin".

Cancel "Xmas", not gratitude, not Christmas.

I know what you want right now, friend.

You want this to all be over.

You want your home to be full again.

You want to hear the sounds of your grandchildren running upstairs.

You want to show off to your neighbours how tall and beautiful your grandchildren have become.

You want to use the table settings you bought 11 months ago that still haven't been touched.

You want to fiercely embrace people you love and have gone so long without.

You want to get out of the few rooms that have been your entire world for nearly a year.

You want to pack a suitcase and get on a plane and be able to wake up surrounded by those you've been missing.

You want to smell your daughter's apple pie when you open a front door that you know like the back of your hand, and feel the beautiful déjà-vu of being home.

You want a joyful holiday to interrupt this sad repetition.

You want a vacation from the lingering loneliness.

You want to exhale deeply surrounded by your tribe.

You want to feel normal again.

I know you want these things because I want them, too

I feel it all: the homesickness, the isolation, the incessant grieving over a year you've lost, the disbelief at every moment and milestone you've been robbed of, the volcanic anger because you want it to be over now.

But it isn't over now.

It is far worse than it has ever been.

Of all the times not to give in to the exhaustion, it's now.

Of all the seasons not to abandon diligence, it's this one.

Of all the days not to lose patience, it's today.

This virus wants that.

It wants you to say to hell with it all, to give in to the seasonal muscle memory that pulls you toward your people; to think that you can sidestep it simply by wishing it away; to imagine that the familiar faces or the greeting card surroundings or the momentary lightness make you immune to the danger—but they can't.

Life and death are in your hands and in your plans right now.

The only way this virus does its violent, destructive, deadly work, is by getting the proximity to other people that only you can give it. It cannot have access to human bodies unless you escort it there upon your breath and through your laughter and in your stories—and into the lungs of your daughter, your children, your best friends, your new grandchild, the person standing next to you at the supermarket, the people they know and love.

And in this way, this vile and unrelenting killer is relying upon you right now—and so are the people you share this place with.

And right now, the painful, counterintuitive but redemptive choice, is to show people how much you love them all by staying away from them.

I know how badly you want this gathering on this year, how much you need a respite from the grieving—but I hope you'll want more than that.

I hope you'll want years or maybe even decades to make plans and go on holidays and celebrate birthdays and attend graduations and make memories and share meals, and do all the living you can. I hope that all those future possibilities and the multitude of lives you are tethered to—are worth more than a few hours on Christmas Day or Boxing Day.

For you and your children, for your best friends and grandchildren, for doctors and nurses stretched to their limits, for strangers walking by you at the petrol station, for the exhausted, lonely, and scared humanity you share this life with—postpone your celebrations a few months longer.

The greatest gift we can give the people we love in this moment is to keep our distance from them. The most tangible expression of our gratitude for this life and the lives around us and for everything we have, is to be still.

The most honourable stewardship of our freedoms in days like these, is to restrain ourselves and to sacrifice on behalf of others.

The most loving act we can engage in this season, is to wait where we are.

Give thanks for this life and stay home.

[Anyone for Chess?](#) *Do you play chess?* Local chess clubs are probably closed during the various lockdowns, and you may not be able to get out anyway. But you can still play chess if you join the Clergy Correspondence Chess Club. The Club has been going for over 50 years: at first members played by post, then we allowed phone, while these days most of us exchange moves by email or using the Scheming Mind web server, membership of which is available to CCCC members at much reduced rates.

If you are interested in this way of playing chess email the Club Secretary, brucecarlin@cooptel.net (or write to him at 44 Frank Lane, Dewsbury, WF12 0JJ) and he will send you further information.

[THE BEATITUDES, edited for a CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN](#) *Blessed are the poor in spirit, depressed by the sheer effort of dealing with every piece of bad news, all those who live on the margins, worrying how they will feed their children tomorrow, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Blessed are those who mourn, all who are mourning normality, the shielded and those self-isolated and alone with their fears, all suffering from the cancellation of holidays and events looked forward to, *for they will be comforted*.

Blessed are the meek, the ones who bring a listening ear and helping hand to those in need, volunteers having vaccines tested on them, all feeling vulnerable or fragile, students in bubbles and all obediently suspending their freedoms by staying indoors to slow the spread of the virus, *for they will inherit the earth*.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness – for the right way to live with new and changing restrictions, learning what a lockdown has to teach us, those who dare to ask hard questions of our leaders and systems and hope for a new community cohesion to replace social distancing, *for they will be filled*.

Blessed are the merciful, all NHS and care home keyworkers, supermarket shelf stackers and check-out staff, takeaway cooks and bicycle mechanics, teachers and farmers and delivery drivers, undertakers and clergy online, *for they will receive mercy*.

Blessed are the pure in heart, the ones who bring joy amid sorrow, who bring kindness to a world preoccupied with self-interest, children who laugh and all who entertain us, musicians and actors unable to perform, the pets which keep us company, all who cling to scraps of hope, *for they will see God*.

Blessed are the peacemakers, all who campaign and pray for peace with justice, those promoting the sustainability of creation, all who know that Black Lives Matter, all working for other people's mental health and wellbeing, *for they will be called children of God*.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, the sick and those on hospital waiting lists, the furloughed and the unemployed, refugees and asylum seekers, the imprisoned and those shut in with their abusers, all who have died or will die from the virus, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

Geoffrey Marshall

[Reflections on Reaching Seventy Years - A Bridge, A Plough and a Surfer](#) As I reached my milestone three score years and ten, it has been a time during the current pandemic and second lockdown in the UK to reflect on life and ministry and where we go from here. A few months ago, the verses from Isaiah 43v18,19 came to me again... *'Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. Behold I am doing a new thing... I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.'* While I do not want to dwell on the past, it is good to look back and see the way that God has led so far but also be alert to the way ahead. Perhaps others feel the same?

These are three word pictures (some would say prophetic words) which have been given us at different stages of our lives in the UK and a few trips overseas as well as one time in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf.

After coming to a personal faith at Sussex University in February 1971 at a Mission led by David Watson, I felt a call to mission and ministry in my last term while reading David's book *'God's Freedom Fighters'*. The words from Isaiah 61v1-3 give us Jesus' manifesto for mission and became ours *'As the Father sent me, so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit.'* (John 20). Luke 22v31,32 also became vocational verses... especially the call to *'strengthen the brethren.'* And Jesus' call to Simon Peter in Luke 5 and John 21 also applied to me!! *'Follow me... Feed and tend my sheep and lambs.'* I initially went to serve as a VSO in Freetown, Sierra Leone, an Educational Statistician serving as an Additional Travelling Secretary with Scripture Union and helping to launch 3 Youth for Christ centres in Freetown. My call to ministry was confirmed at an SU Easter Retreat addressed by a Ghanaian evangelist, and I returned to join a YWAM Student Outreach team in Brighton before starting ministry training at Trinity College, Bristol. At ACCM in January 1976, I think all 14 candidates were in their 20s, all were selected. In my second year of training, I met my wife Pauline Russell on a Redland Parish Church walk being married just before the start of my 3rd year at college. Tony Baker was our Vicar,, also one of our college Lecturers and he married us in September 1978.

But where to serve as I felt a call to the Mission Field AND to the Church of England and my new wife was reluctant to leave UK for Africa, as I might have considered? At a CPAS Ordinands' retreat at Herne Bay it

became clear to us. We were called to Mission and we were called to the Church of England. Martin Gooder, David Bronnert and a third vicar from a group of rural parishes shared the Mission Vision of the Inner Urban, the Multi-cultural and the Rural parishes as being on the Frontline of mission in UK. So, in 1979, we set off for our first curacy in the Bushbury Team Ministry near Featherstone prison in Wolverhampton, in the challenging area of Low Hill and the Church of the Good Shepherd. Robert Johnson was the inspiring Team Vicar, John Mockford was Rector and Roy Taylor Team Vicar at St. James Fordhouses. There was also a local man, Gerry Griffin, as Assistant Curate (SSM) as well as Lionel Simpkins in his second curacy at the Parish Church.

A BRIDGE

The first Picture of the BRIDGE was given us in the last months in Bristol whilst visiting Odd Down Fellowship in Bath. A black South African visitor called Jameson from Soweto was sharing and he prayed over us and gave us the picture of a BRIDGE to indicate the sort of ministry that we would exercise. A BRIDGE connects two sides and I had learnt from some CAMPUS training with the Bridge tract at SPREE '73 at Earls Court, how the Bridge between God and Man is, of course Jesus Christ who was both human and divine and through His death on the Cross provided a bridge for sinful man to gain access to a holy God. Arthur Blessitt, who travelled with a Cross all over the world and started his walk across Africa in Freetown Sierra Leone in 1973, composed a song 'Jesus is the Bridge over Troubled Water', borrowing some lyrics from Paul Simon! So, part of our Bridge ministry was to share about the Bridge = Jesus.

More than that, we also sought to help Christians work together wherever we served. The Lausanne Movement motto really resonated with me as I studied it for one of my Mission Studies at Trinity. 'The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world'. Meaning that we need each other as none of us has the whole gospel message and need the insights and ministries of others to complement our own. We ourselves would sometimes need to be the Bridge between different cultures and peoples in the places where we would serve. David Watson was criticised once for suggesting that the Reformation was a mistake! The context was that the Reformation brought great division in the Body of Christ even though, from my perspective having trained at a reformed college, it also brought the rediscovery of many essential truths that had been lost at that time – Grace, Faith, Scripture, Christ alone, in particular. So, a Bridge person can sometimes be misunderstood and criticised by 'both sides' and it can be painful. We experienced some of that pain in ministry. But we have also contributed to our own pain by not spending enough time listening and walking in the shoes of those with whom we serve and minister. Father forgive. After two years in Bushbury, we moved on to a Second Curacy in Stafford with Dick Sargeant, a godly and energetic Rural Dean at Castle Church in a church that could be described as 'Chapel to the Golf Course' in a posh part of the market town. We were living on a Council Estate and Self-Build houses (evacuated from Birmingham) two doors from Highfields Hall, the home for the Castle Players but also a Community Centre. We helped to launch a weekly family service there and experimented with many forms of outreach – Open Airs, Good News Down Your Street, Evangelism Explosion and Student Teas to launch a CYFA group. God blessed many initiatives. Partnership with Rising Brook Baptist Church was vital for the Youth Work also and MayFire 1983 was a great Diocesan Celebration that I helped with others to plan. That was my first introduction to Roger Jones when he came with a choir to perform 'Saints Alive'.

A PLOUGH

Towards the end in Stafford, we hosted Clive Calver at a Ministers' Fellowship, he was touring in advance of Mission England to encourage support. We wholeheartedly gave ourselves to engage initially in prayer and established Prayer Triplets as suggested. David Watson came to Stafford to lead a Town-wide Celebration and I remember him talking about the '*Kingdom of God = Creation healed*' (Hans Kung). David Pawson also came to speak at a United Ascension Day Praise event and I remember him speaking for 2 hours, with a comfort break half-way and permission to leave if we wanted to. Very few did and he continued to speak on Acts 1v3 about the Kingdom of God (in 5 Acts – similar to Tom Wright's description). It was outstanding. I was invited to join in a Prayer Event before Christmas 1983 where several churches met together in preparation for Mission England in summer 1984. There I was given the second Picture of being a PLOUGH. A Plough is needed, of course, to prepare the ground for sowing the seed. It needs some energy from oxen or these days from a tractor to cut through the hard soil and break up the ground and

maybe to remove the boulders. This meant a Pioneering ministry in an area where the seed had not yet been sown. But where should we go? We knocked on several doors. Some suggested the Church Army, but I still felt a call also to be a BRIDGE, that is to share the Gospel about Jesus THE Bridge over Troubled Waters and to be a Unifier and Reconciler wherever possible.

Eventually, Bishop Hugh Montefiore in Birmingham invited us to have a look at a parish in Sparkbrook, which was a Muslim-majority area in the south-east of this city. Five people had turned it down and it was before the days of 'competitive interviews'. We loved the Vicarage, with its large garden and the massive church built by the Lloyd family opposite Farm Park, where they used to live in the 1860s. There were many large, three story houses, some in need of repair and some derelict due to heavy bombing during WWII as the BSA factory was nearby. The area had changed dramatically but there was a faithful remnant of praying people – both black and white – in the church. 50 people in a church which could seat 900. We said yes and moved in January 1984 during a snow-storm. There was a fire on the day of our Institution in some of the derelict houses opposite the church.

We had many adventures in Sparkbrook and fulfilled our callings to be a bridge and a plough, which is the title of my reflections on 18 years of multi-cultural ministry in inner city Birmingham. Currently, I am working with others to put together a 'Mission History of Christ Church Sparkbrook 1867-today' and a second book 'Mission Stories from Christ Church Sparkbrook'.

From Sparkbrook, we moved to Horley in the Diocese of Southwark in 2002 continuing our ministry of being a Bridge and a Plough, with visits to Toronto Airport church in 2004 and links with On the Move (BBQ and Worship missions) and SOMA (Sharing of Ministry Abroad) back in Sierra Leone for the first time after 25 years. A key help towards the vision of celebrating diversity in the church was to engage with Richard Fosters excellent book 'Streams of Renewal' with monthly Celebrations at 7pm, with all three churches in the Horley Team ministry taking part. We learnt to celebrate the different streams within the history of the church, their strengths and their weaknesses but how Jesus embodies perfectly everyone. After some time of fractured unity, the Team ministry worked better together and so did all of the 7 churches in the town as we took part in an On the Move mission in the town centre in September 2007 and also engaged with Paul Field's excellent musical 'CARGO' both celebrating both the end of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and highlighting Human Trafficking today.

After 9 years in Surrey, we felt the call to move on again and were guided by one of our daughters who had become a Marathon runner. We supported her and a friend in Rome and then flew on for a week's holiday in Cyprus, both in Paphos and Kyrenia with a stopover in Nicosia to drop off our rented car. In short, we were invited to apply for a vacant post in Ayia Napa, South East Cyprus and were amazed to be selected a month later.

We moved to a village 10 miles south of Famagusta and 7 miles from Ayia Napa to serve the Anglican Chaplaincy in the holiday town amongst Brits living in or visiting Cyprus as well as a wonderful group of Filipina maids who had been made welcome by our predecessors. They joined us on Sunday mornings, had a monthly meal in one of our homes and supported Alpha wholeheartedly on Sunday lunchtimes. A highlight for us in Cyprus was visiting our daughter in Jordan twice where she had gone to learn Arabic prior to possible teaching in Lebanon. But also, we helped a local team to prepare for a Musical Mission with Roger Jones + soloists to each district of Cyprus in November 2013 with the Musical 'Two Sisters and a Funeral' (Mary, Martha & Lazarus). One special memory was weekly visits to Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta to support their Choir in preparation for their performance. The Nigerian students there were dedicated, talented and amazing. One of them took the part of Jesus in the Musical both there and in Kyrenia at St. Andrew's Church.

Our 3 year contract in Cyprus was not renewed and it was time to return to the UK. But where? The Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf was linked with the Diocese of Exeter. We felt a call to Exeter to be nearer my roots in Bristol. Only one post was advertised in February 2014 so we applied and I was called to interview a month later. The Five Alive Mission Community (East Devon) was a group of five rural churches. Total population approximately 3,000 people and 30,000 + sheep, cattle, pigs etc.. It included some shooting and hunting areas on the Blackdown Hills and was just 6 miles from the sea at Seaton and Lyme Regis. I was the only one interviewed as the other two had withdrawn and was appointed at age 63

offering up to five years. It was another steep learning curve for us in these small congregations but often large church buildings. However, the community spirit in the villages was excellent and the main 'PLOUGH' work was to form an 'OPEN THE BOOK' School Assembly team to work regularly in each of the three primary schools in the area. We partnered with our local Baptist and Methodist Churches wherever possible in ministry and mission and saw three new churches born in Axminster while we were there, just 2 miles away. Unity and Variety, Mission and Service were growing as we worked and prayed together. However, a Plough is hard work sometimes and needs to be kept sharp and pushed or pulled by others with sufficient strength. We were getting older and weaker. But the passion remained.

A SURFER

Retirement came at Michaelmas 2019, 40 years after being licensed as Curate in Lichfield Diocese in 1979 but where to move to now? We felt a need to be near some family and also the sea, having been close to the sea in our last three parishes (just 20-30mins away). 30 minutes from Bristol please. We started looking eventually being guided through several people to consider Weston Super Mare with great travel links and affordable housing near to a wonderful United church in Locking Castle. The Third PICTURE was given to us at the New Wine Leaders Conference in March this year at Harrogate Convention Centre. A friend from Birmingham who knew us from our Sparkbrook years said, 'Now is the time for you to be a SURFER'. Learn to Surf the Wave of God's Spirit. He already knew about the Bridge and the Plough, both of which can be hard work at times. But what does it mean to Surf the Wave? Perhaps there is also an application about Surfing the Internet wisely and using technology for both Online and Offline, Virtual and Face-to-Face ministry and mission into the future.

On a recent holiday in Port Isaac, we went to visit the Tubestation, an ecumenical mission in a former Methodist chapel in Polzeath, where I had often been with my family on holiday in the 1960s (the resort not the chapel!). Like most people who visit North Cornwall, I had learnt to surf on a body board without a wetsuit then. But now everyone has a wetsuit and all ages surf in all sorts of sea and temperature conditions, even in the depths of winter. At our new church in Locking Castle, they welcome the five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4v11 and one of the pastors helped me to understand the picture of the SURFER. Learn to paddle out to the waves, wait for the right one, don't worry if you miss it as another will be coming, be encouraged by other surfers and learn from them...

In 1972 a vision for Revival was birthed in me while still at University. I had a foretaste of revival in Sierra Leone amongst the young people there and have never given up praying and waiting for a sovereign move of God's Spirit upon our land which could then overflow to other nations. In 1939, a book was written called 'England before and after Wesley'. It tracks the before situation, during and after the Evangelical Awakening at the end of the 18th Century and the many social reforms which followed in the 19th Century. I studied Revival a little also at Birmingham Bible Institute when studying for my Masters in Mission in 1997-2000. I completed my dissertation on '*The Gospel Breaks Down Barriers*' – a study of mono and multi-cultural churches with case studies in Birmingham, Karachi and Freetown, available via Church Army Research Unit in Sheffield.

My prayer is that I can continue, with others, to be a BRIDGE (unifier), a PLOUGH (pioneer) and a SURFER (just riding the wave of God's Spirit). How has God spoken and directed you in your life so far? As David Watson used to say 'The Best is Yet to Come'!

Simon Holloway

A LOCKDOWN CHALLENGE With the cancellation of both the Study Day and the Cathedral Eucharist & Lunch it was agreed that the 2020 Retired Clergy Conference in the Ely Diocese should go ahead, somehow. As Covid19 prevented a 'real-life' meeting the only available alternative was an online event. The first conference, held in 2017, offered retired clergy/spouses/partners/widows/widowers an occasion at which senior diocesan staff would discuss diocesan issues and the Director of Ministry would address issues/topics relevant to retired clergy. Feedback after the conference was very positive:

"A heartfelt and sincere THANK YOU for arranging this morning's conference; both sessions being most enlightening and encouraging".

“We were being told important things about our diocese, and being invited to feel part of it....do make it an annual thing”.

Before lockdown we planned to follow the 2017 routine of beginning at 10am, ending with lunch at 1pm with breaks between sessions to allow time for as much social interaction as possible.

With Plan A not possible it was decided that the 2020 Zoom conference should focus on some of the Wider Questions raised in paragraph 8 of the RCACoE report “Retired Clergy in the Church of England now”. In 8.4 the report offered the following headings for consideration by those who shape diocesan and national policy, as well as by retired clergy themselves:

1. **Vocation:** how can clergy be helped towards good vocational decisions on retirement, how their priesthood and ministry continues, what they will do and where they will live?
2. **Vision and calling:** how do the Bishop and the diocese see the ministry of retired clergy as sharing in the mission of the church? What scope is there for greater consistency in calling retired clergy to serve where the church sees a need?
3. **Planning and sending:** what place does the potential offered by retired clergy have in pastoral and mission planning? Who in the diocese knows the retired clergy and can audit their skills? How aware of retired clergy are ministers responsible for oversight?
4. **Support:** what is the right level and kind of continuing development for retired clergy? Is the current model of Clergy Retirement Officer now superseded by new requirements for training and as well as pastoral care? How can clergy avoid being “lost” at retirement, and how can a welcome be assured if they move diocese? How should retired clergy be included in communication and, particularly during a vacancy or pastoral reorganisation?

This year’s conference began at 10.00 and ended at 12.30. Each session was followed by discussion in Breakout rooms (with membership changing instead of remaining constant) and there were two five minute ‘leg stretch’ breaks.

In the first session the Bishop of Huntingdon introduced **Vision and Calling**. In the second session the interim Director of Ministry and Mission introduced **Vocation** and in session three the Fresh Expressions and Pioneer Adviser, together with the Mission Lead for Inherited Church, posed the question *“Developing mission in the midst of a pandemic and beyond – a role for retired clergy?”*

Each speaker posed questions for the breakout room discussions. After the conference I received many positive responses together with some helpful suggestions about improvements for the future. ahead, well managed Zooming is here to stay. ***David Pritchard – Retired Clergy Officer for the Diocese of Ely***

[The Rough with the Smooth – a new book by Martin Tunncliffe](#) Written to coincide with the celebration of 800years since the building of Solihull’s church of St. Alphege Martin presents themes from 20years of revised parish magazine articles in a thought provoking and light-hearted way. Topics include Time and eternity, Resurrection, Violence, the Psalms, the problem of pain, Jerusalem and lots more. Something to ponder over and sometimes make you smile. Price £11.95 plus post, profits to Church work with children and young people. To obtain a copy please phone:01217456522 or email mwtunncliffe@outlook.com

[Making Christ Visible – Robert Paterson ISBN 978-0-244-75612-3](#) Robert raises both basic and new issues in this book, questions some assumptions and challenges dumbed-down and pietistic theology

and practice. It is loaded with 47 years of experience in ministry with ordinary people, making, nurturing and sustaining disciples; and of being a church leader convinced that the future for the Church lies in the quality of life demonstrated by Christ's disciples. Published in 2018 it is well-worth reading during the lockdown!

Reflections on retirement Diocesan pre-retirement conferences, where they exist, and reflection days may help us understand technicalities and process, and the importance of a spiritual anchor. However, when the time comes to retire from stipendiary ministry, notwithstanding the good wishes and hopes expressed at the final service, there is a sense of free fall. Both, as momentum springs us beyond the buffers as it were, and the nothingness that engulfs. I suppose it's a bit like training to be a parachutist. Nothing can prepare you for the plunge and buffeting of the elements.

All stipendiary clergy will have experienced the stresses of changing jobs, a new home and changing schools. To ease the anxiety the expectant and hopeful new congregation cushion and coddle as equilibrium is sought. That may be a little romantic for some, but you know what I mean. Coming retirement, the same stress arises. 6th form was still an issue as were my wife's hopes. All these were added to by finding and buying a suitable house, arranging the mortgage and all legality. Things we had been cushioned from for decades. Would our income be adequate? Of course, there was the profound sense of loss.

In training the emphasis was to find being and not just doing. In actuality a large part of parish life was made up of the doing with the being accosted mostly in the dance of things. So, the dance stops. Who am I? What am I? No familiar network or support; downsizing of home (yes, missing the draughts) and reducing my library of books by over two-thirds (a heartache). No structure or doings that made much sense left a vacuum with the life-line of the Daily Office dangling tentatively just out of reach. In my pre-retirement days, the thought of not writing sermons and offering midweek reflections seemed to be the warm glow of any transition. In actuality, this added to the void and after the habit of decades the words still wanted to be out and heard. Not being a natural contemplative, I found my being was wrapped up so much with the doing.

In and amongst those in my cul-de-sac are some retired folk, happily transitioned and engaged with gardening, the mowing of lawns, weeding paths, sweeping leaves, clearing gutters and DIY. Being so encompassed by parish life, I had no favourable circumstance which extended hobby into some other natural rhythm. Although, I was aware, through the many requirements in parish life of valley gutter maintenance, sound flashings, soak-aways, portable appliance testing and other electrical checks. Not always that useful in domestic life, I admit. It felt like a dead-end.

Staying within the diocese helped, as well as the Diocesan Bishop's insistence that all newly retired should refrain from church work and spend at least 6 months before PTO would be considered. Although baulking at first, on reflection it was a wise directive. Now, two years in, at least the canopy has opened. Now, dance steps have changed and the harmonies are richer. The melody of family, more dominant than before, intertwines with a Daily Office fitting our situation. My local parish Priest has gathered me in to share in the liturgy, to preach at times and celebrate. In return I offer cover, a listening ear, prayerful support and knowing when to keep my mouth tight shut.

Covid-19 has changed the rhythm of things of course and has exacerbated falling numbers between national lockdowns. These will bounce back once things clear up, but my Vicar worries over the downward trend. He is a hardworking and conscientious priest and it is a privilege to serve him. Sadly, it's a dilemma that continues to face us all and quite beyond the scope of how most perceive the ministry of the Church to be. Most folk we see at the shops or around and about are as spiritual as they've always been, but churchgoing for the majority seems nothing to do with it. What's the point? Diwali and the festival of light overcoming darkness makes as much sense as many outward show of Christmas festivity, to which many will be looking forward. What makes Christianity different? Are we missing a point or is it all just the same, but in a different guise?

Perhaps musing on the Gospel reading for the second Sunday before Advent, the parable of the talents, can offer us some true light. The teaching follows Jesus' bruising yet successful confrontation with religious

leaders. They are represented by the servant who when given the talent worth of the master's property did not put it to its proper use, keeping it hidden. They receive the warrant, the commission, the charism to continue the work of the master, but did not use it for its purpose. It is as if they received nothing at all and their true relationship with the master void and outside his joy. This warrant, this commission, this charism isn't only concerned with to whom and how to worship and private ethic, but relates to the full teaching and living of the Kingdom; the Shalom where none are to be left out of the loving peace. We in the west have been gelded through centuries of marginalisation. We are told to know our place and keep to the spiritual. However, our good news is only seen as making sense to folk in the earthing of our message, by furthering signs of the Kingdom in the here and now, not just in the hereafter.

We are to put our money where our mouth is, as it were. Preaching the gospel and all the rest we'd expect, of course. With that come the befriending of the poor, the naked and the refugee as well as campaigning for social justice and the creation of a fair society for all. How can our message be seen as true without the good news acted out?

True, the Church of England actively makes representation to government and promotes such issues in the House of Lords. Much good does come out of this relationship with the State. All this is mostly lost on parishioners, yet our warrant, our commission, our charism compels us to bring these issues as a church to bear in the normalcy of life. If not, then there is truly no difference in our message from others, proving Don Cupitt was correct in his assertions. When our Master returns and asks for his talent, how many drachmas will we have left to repay?

This all goes to prove the adage that you can take the priest out of the pulpit, but.....

Michael Thompson

GOD in LOCKDOWN Don't miss the opportunity to get a copy of this new book coming out soon. These 50 reflections were originally Thoughts for the Day written for members of St Barnabas, Swanmore during Lockdown 1.

It's a not-for-profit production and will be available soon from Yorkshire Publishing Services www.yps-publishing.co.uk. Priced at £5.99 to be accessible to all and with titles such as *Tiny, happy people, Following the Crowd, Priscilla and Aquila, Ampliatus and who? Hanging out the Washing, Matthias and Marcus Rashford for PM* there is something for everyone.

Hazel and Nick Whitehead retired to Dean two years ago and enjoy being part of the diocese of Portsmouth. They hope that retired clergy in particular will be able to help individuals and small groups (face to face when legal and on-line) to use the reflections and questions as ways to catch a glimpse – through the twigs of a nest or in the flight of a goose – of God in Lockdown. *We* may have been locked down – but not God!

New members of the RCACoE National Council Following the notification of two vacancies on the national council two members have come forward to fill those places.

John Scott will represent London and Southwark dioceses, John was ordained in Southwark diocese serving in Dartford at St Albans where I started a local Samaritans office; followed by a second curacy St Laurence Goring-by-Sea. He worked in the Health Service as a Hospital Chaplain to the City of Wells group for seven years. Whilst there becoming the NALGO Rep for the Area Health Region. Then Chaplain and Head of R.E at Pangbourne Naval College Berkshire. He has been in Education for over 28 years as a Chaplain/Teacher, and a Territorial Army Chaplain for 22 years. His last stipendiary post was Vicar of St Philip's Church Reigate for 23 years and Chaplain to St Bede's Ecumenical school, Redhill.

Robert Daborn will represent Hereford, Worcester, Birmingham and Lichfield dioceses. He was ordained deacon in 1978, retired in 2018 and now lives in Shropshire. As well as helping out in local parishes, he enjoys the opportunity to explore new and dormant interests, including roaming the Shropshire hills, chasing the horizons west towards Wales.

Half of his stipendiary ministry has been in parishes, including a curacy in South London and incumbencies in Shropshire and Staffordshire covering both rural and town centre parishes. The rest has included a

variety of posts, chaplaincy at the University of Durham, serving as Director of Local Ministry and OLM Principal for Lichfield Diocese, and latterly as Vice-Principal and Dean of the West of England Ministerial Training Course.

He has always enjoyed helping people to discover and develop their gifts of ministry, both lay and ordained, and finds it immensely rewarding to watch people grow into the ministers God has called them to be. He hopes that his time on the RCA Council will enable him to support the RCA's work in being a voice for the retired within the wider church, and also to encourage his fellow clergy to make retirement a creative and fulfilling period of their ministry.

New Newsletter Editor As from January the newsletter will be edited by a more professional hand than the last three editions. Revd. Mark Rudall will be taking over and items for the March newsletter should be sent to him by the 15th of that month at 108 Prospect Road Farnborough GU14 8NS markrudall@gmail.com We do depend on member contributions for the content.

Meetings in 2021 We hope to be able to hold again our two annual meetings next year and are currently trying to make arrangements for these in the late summer or early autumn provided that such gatherings are then made possible by the availability of vaccine in the early part of the year. Dates, times and places will be notified in the newsletter and on our website.

Please send items for the next Newsletter to

markrudall@gmail.com before 15th March 2021

Newsletter circulation

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 80 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 please encourage them to write requesting a postal copy.

Malcolm Liles

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

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