



Newsletter *Summer* 2021

www.rcacoe.org

Registered Charity No 1172186

From the Chair



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We are hesitantly awaiting the further easing of Covid restrictions. Will it actually happen and there be no further

lockdowns? Who can tell? Despite the doubts and the difficulties of planning and booking holidays, I do hope you all manage to enjoy the possibility of meeting up again with friends and families. Isolation, loneliness and a real sense of deprivation of human contact have been some of the most difficult aspects to bear over the last eighteen months.

In our churches

There has been considerable innovation in how churches have coped with worship and meetings. New people have been reached online who had never previously come to a church service. Churches have been able to offer their buildings and resources as foodbank centres, vaccination centres and in a myriad other imaginative ways. There has been anxiety too over falling income with all the restrictions on attendance, and this is writ large in the dioceses.

One cannot but be aware of the proposed staffing cuts both in lay and clerical posts, which many dioceses seem anxious to bring in. Parishes entering a vacancy are clearly worried that a pastoral reorganisation may result in the loss of their vicar and a much less satisfactory provision.

I always get concerned when finance seems to be the driving force that brooks no alternatives. I know we must be realistic here but I do hope that senior leadership teams in our dioceses will listen carefully to the voices of the people in the parishes. Clear explanation and communication are paramount.

What can we offer?

I know that I have written about this before but I really do believe that many of us, especially in the first ten years of retirement, would be willing to commit to more than the casual 'filling in' ministry of helping out in vacancies, sickness and holidays. This is not about 'keeping the show on the road' in the same old way, but allowing us the opportunity to continue to offer our gifts of time, experience and specialism to the parishes and diocese. A negotiated commitment is surely possible. The bishop might ask their clergy retirement officer and rural/area deans to monitor such offers and resources.

The whole People of God

I do understand the risk of over-clericalising the church and I would want to stress the importance, too, of further resourcing our lay people. Together as the whole People of God we all have a part to play as we begin to emerge from the pandemic.

Every blessing to you for a happy and peaceful summer.

+Ian



Editorial Note:

You'll see we are now in two columns! A small adjustment made at a reader's suggestion which, it's hoped, may make for a newsletter easier on the eye of those reading it in PDF form.

Warm thanks to those who have sent contributions for inclusion in this edition. We'd like more, ideally about 600 words! Please send them direct to markrudall@gmail.com.

The Church, the Virus and the Ministry Contract

***John Schild* takes an overview of the real costs of ministry**

Don't they say that fools rush in - whereas angels call a meeting to check the facts?

I was one such fool who perhaps started to redeem himself by rather late giving time for second thoughts.

It happened like this: a very dear friend had just been accepted for ordination training and sent me a copy of her BAP report. I was intrigued by the concluding paragraph which announced that she was to receive a copy of the booklet 'Financial Information for Recommended Candidates'. A quick rummage found a copy on-line; I skimmed through it and without leaving a moment for second thoughts I emailed her with 'golly, they got you on the cheap.' While this was factually correct I realised too late that it could be read as demeaning the years of effort and commitment she had already put into preparation for her on-line BAP.

Pondering my thoughtless outpouring led me towards the realisation that I had wandered clumsily into a serious and highly topical question about how the Church of England identifies candidates for ordination and supports them through training and into ministry.

It was an easy choice for my friend: already in her fifties and by opting for regional 'MTS' training, and ordination to non-stipendiary ministry, they were indeed 'getting her on the cheap.' In sum, in addition to the aggregated cost of provision of a locally based part-time training programme, the cost to the ministry division amounted to a book grant and bus fare.

The Ministry Division's 'Resourcing Ministerial Education' booklet sets out in detail a wide spectrum of training pathways and associated costs to bring a candidate out of the selection process into a training programme for ordained ministry. To illustrate an ocean of difference, I

dare to contrast my friend's low financial impact with that of a candidate under thirty two years of age recommended for three years training at a residential institution whose training costs must approach £50,000.

My friend's personal circumstances allow her to offer perhaps ten years of committed ministry without pay or pension, whereas a sub-thirty year old entering stipendiary ministry might expect to be supported by a stipend and further benefits such as rent-free housing for maybe thirty five years, followed by a pension for life. This has been, and still is, my own story.

One single standard

The Church of England has one single standard for what it expects of its ordained ministers in terms of spirituality, quality and commitment. Whatever the route, ordination is always to this one standard. Neither the path to ordination nor the anticipated presence or absence of a stipend is of any account. The contrast I draw is only between the notional high-end and low-end cost of pathways through training, and the vast spread of potential support costs which must accrue to an individual priest through a lifetime of service.

While any new ordinand will vow commitment to a lifetime of costly ministry, the finances which the Archbishop's Council will commit in response lie somewhere between 'pocket money' and all the associated costs of anticipated financial security and domestic comfort for life.

Behind this local story lies a vastly bigger question of how the post-pandemic Church of England intends to continue delivering to the nation an educated and adequately resourced ministry workforce. As a long-retired ministry foot soldier I have no access to privileged information, so must rely on public media and internet chat to help me explore the huge challenge set by Covid-19 to the Archbishop's Council as it confronts the fact that its historic framework for the maintenance of a socially immersive parish ministry is no longer fit for purpose.

Non-viable dioceses

Viewed from where I now sit at the end of the tracks in Cornwall, it is evident that our county-wide Diocese of Truro is in itself financially non-viable. While the Diocesan Board of Finance inevitably and properly calls for more and more sacrificial giving from the parishes, the gulf between what is asked for and what the diocese can realistically expect to receive is unbridgeable now, and the gap can only be expected to grow substantially wider in the wake of Covid-19.

Truro Diocese's many scattered rural congregations constitute a subset of the entire county's seasonal, low skill, low wage economy. We do not enjoy the GDP privileges of the Home Counties but our rural church communities are no less deserving of a competent and generous-hearted ministry. Nor are we alone in our urgency to draw more water out of steadily depleting wells.

To cite a single example, Chelmsford Diocese has apparently warned that parishes must no longer expect to have a resident stipendiary priest unless they budget to pay an annual contribution to the diocesan common fund in excess of £60,000 (the stipend plus the notional on-costs of one stipendiary parish priest) That figure may even be less than realistic in metropolitan Essex, but it's hopelessly out of reach for more than a disappearingly small percentage of the 200 parishes that constitute Truro Diocese.

I have heard it said that God has sent the virus as a punishment for unspecified global sins. I see it more as a warning to the church that while the way we live now is actually unsustainable, our corporate fear of damage to our self-image has deterred us from the radical thinking and courageous action without which we must inevitably slide down into public failure. Covid-19 demands that something must change.

Aspiring young ordinands

I value and approve the determination of the Ministry Division to draw into the workforce the brightest and best of today's aspiring young

ordinands, and of course we must settle for nothing less. But can we actually afford to go on making the same promises of all-through-life support which fifty years ago enabled me to make the leap as a young man, out of secular employment into ordained ministry? I did so with the clear expectation that the church would match my commitment with its own, because once committed I could not go back.

We could scan ahead twenty or thirty years, to when today's new young ordinands begin to approach their later years. Are we willing now to ringfence a portion of our historic wealth to ensure its future sufficiency to bear the weight of adequately rewarding the faith and commitment of those currently taking their first steps into a lifelong ministry?

I shudder at the thought of (shall we say?) a fifty year old priest, with twenty plus years of faithful and energetic service behind him, being told by his bishop that his stipendiary post will no longer be supported; thus rendering him jobless, and with his dependent family, homeless.

The ministry contract that has undergirded the parish based presence of the established church for generations is under threat as it never has been before.

The moral argument for the exercise of a duty of care towards the stipendiary work-force trumps all other arguments about how a post-covid house of bishops will balance the books. If financial stringency dictates that the 'deal' of lifetime support has to be withdrawn from tomorrow's rookie clergy-people, the implication for stipend levels cannot be avoided. The happy accident of a spouse's earning power must not be used as an excuse for holding down clergy stipends at a level sufficient to provide 'bread for today', but falling way short of providing the moiety that must be set aside for the day when the 'deal' runs out.

To conclude: while the bigger picture demands that the Church considers seriously its financial future, the recruitment today of an able and

energetic fifty five year old into non stipendiary ministry is not to be dismissed as getting something on the cheap, but applauded as not only prudent but in many ways prophetic. This way, albeit with local variations, we must all travel.

Always provided – and it is essential that it be provided – that the men and women invited into a lifetime of stipendiary ministry are never considered as expendable.



Insights from Buckfast and Benedict

John Scott notes the prescience of Benedict's teaching from the 6th Century

When I retired from my Parish in Reigate and moved to Horley some five miles away in 2013, I thought that my Lay Readers had had enough of me.

This turned out not to be, and since then, we have continued to meet for a weekly meal out. We have all sorts of discussions mostly theological as well as just chewing the cud. They have been good friends to me in my retirement and very supportive in helping me adjust to my new lifestyle.

At the beginning of June this year, at their suggestion, we all went to Buckfast Abbey in Devon for a retreat. While we were there, we did a live telephone service for the Parish where I now help out on a monthly basis.

Before we went the Readers, Peter and Keith, came to my home and pre-recorded the service on my iPad. We did this because we wanted to make sure it would work, and secondly because I had recorded music and wanted to make sure that it was up to BBC standards (or nearly!)

What follows is taken from a sermon that Peter delivered, with a very prescient focus on the historic abbey and on Benedict himself:

Buckfast has a long and fascinating history. The original Benedictine monastery was founded during the reign of King Cnut in 1018 and in comparison with the fifty or so other abbeys in 11th Century England, it was small and unprosperous.

However, centuries passed and it became a pillar of the establishment running a guest hall, almshouse, and school, establishing fairs and markets to encourage local trade. But on 25th February 1539 Henry VIII's Commissioners visited and shut down Buckfast. Following their West Country campaign they delivered 1.5 tons of gold, gilt and silver to the Tower of London, including the treasures of Buckfast Abbey.

After the Dissolution there was a gap of 343 years before someone lived on the site again and plans were adopted in 1884 to rebuild the Abbey in the style of the mid 12th Century. A cheque for £1,000 was found in the collection plate in 1903, and the West Wing was built to provide accommodation for the monastery, and for the novitiate. Work continued, and after 33 years the Abbey was completed in 1938.

So who was this Benedict who inspired the monks here to rebuild the Abbey?

Known for his monastic Rule written in around the year 520, he laid out three very basic concepts: Orientation, Silence and Hospitality:

On 'Orientation' Benedict is keen to stress that Christ must be the focus of our lives. In the Prologue to his Rule he wrote: 'My words are addressed to you especially, whoever you may

be, whatever your circumstances, who turn from the pursuit of your own self-will and ask to enlist under Christ. We can't be both a follower of Jesus and the ruler of our own lives'.

'Silence' is something we need to recapture. Our world is a noisy place. But Benedict doesn't value silence for its own sake, or even for its therapeutic value. He offers two reasons for silence: first so that we can 'listen' to the word of God and to each other. Secondly Benedict advocates silence as the glue which binds and sustains community.

'In a monastery we ought to follow the advice of the psalm which says: *"I have resolved to keep watch over my ways so that I may not sin with my tongue. I am guarded about the way I speak and have accepted silence in humility, refraining from words even that are good"*. In this verse the psalmist shows that because of the value of silence, there are times when it is best not to speak even though what we have in mind is good'.

His basic point is this: that when we talk excessively we can't be listening, either to God or to our neighbour.

Finally, concerning 'Hospitality', in Chapter 53 of the Rule, Benedict wrote:

'Any guest who happens to arrive at the monastery should be received just as we would receive Christ himself.' Benedict is saying that how we meet and greet people is directly correlated with how we 'meet and greet Jesus.' He goes on to say: 'Guests should always be treated with respect and deference' and that 'the greatest care should be taken to give a warm welcome to the poor and pilgrim, because it is in them above all else that Christ is welcomed'.

At Buckfast, we see some of the practical spirit of Benedictine theology but all can learn from three of its basic concepts without living in a monastery: the value of right orientation, silence, and hospitality in daily life.



Safeguarding and Retired Clergy

Mark Rudall has an ear to the ground

The Editor of a newsletter is simply someone who moves words around! In journalistic terms the role hinges on determining timeliness of articles and making them fit available space, so I don't have any more right to comment on the explosive business of Safeguarding than any other retiree with PtO.

Having said that, my diocesan communications role for a number of years made me horribly aware of the church's vulnerability to allegations of neglect and malpractice in the area of Safeguarding, as well as our vulnerability to terminally damaging false accusations.

In the space of just two or three decades, Churches of all denominations have found themselves marooned among the very last open-to-all sectors of Civil Society. Inevitably many of those who cross our thresholds are lugging enormous quantities of pastoral baggage which then weighs heavily on us and drains our limited resources. I'm painfully aware that today's young clergy live with pastoral, ethical and legal pressures often far in excess of the kind I knew, and unthinkable to my late father, whose ministry (initially as a Methodist) began back in 1948...

In the two months or so since assembling the last newsletter I realise I'm not alone in becoming aware of a certain fearfulness among retired clergy about the business of renewing their Safeguarding training: 'I can't be bothered,' say some, 'I've done my bit!' And that's true, but the retired generation has a lot to offer still!

Forgive the analogy but we were the frogs in the proverbial pan of water who felt the heat coming on and were lucky enough, by dint of age or illness, to get out and live another day! We can offer much-appreciated support to our younger colleagues immersed in the thick of today's pastoral complexities. I've had to work through that one myself and later this year will do the Safeguarding training cycle all over again, but I am aware of the thinking behind it and we dare not be slack. The Church, after all, has to be transparently 'up front' and safe as houses in the face it presents as representing part of the Body of Christ.

By way of a parable and wearing a personal 'hobbyhorse hat', an eccentric delight of mine is running a steam launch on the River Wey Navigation.

Every 14 months I have to go through an expensive, painful, nerve-wracking, boiler examination and test. But I'm aware that I'm operating a potential bomb on a public waterway, so that process makes sure my insurers are happy and I sleep well at night! It makes good sense. I think the parallel with the potentially explosive business of Safeguarding in the Church speaks for itself!

In the Spring edition of this newsletter, Ian Brackley quoted from an authoritative figure, Sheila Clarke, the Manager of the NSTDT – and the quote is well worth reprinting - with a couple of sections highlighted - in case anyone missed it!

'It is recognised that those with Permission to Officiate (PtO) and Readers Emeriti still need to participate in safeguarding learning. It is also recognised that the exercise of PtO or the level of ministry of emeriti readers can vary considerably between different people. For some it will involve a high level of work regularly, for others a very low level of work irregularly. As the main Safeguarding Leadership Pathway is now targeted at those people "who play a lead role in shaping the culture of the Church body concerned" those with PtO and emeriti readers whose role meets this criterion must participate in the main Safeguarding Leadership Pathway. Those with PtO or emeriti readers whose role does not meet this criterion must participate in a bespoke PtO/Readers Emeriti Safeguarding Learning Pathway.

'The decision about which Pathway an emeriti reader or someone with PtO should take must be made by the Bishop in consultation with the DSA and/or safeguarding trainer. The local supervisor (incumbent or rural dean) may also be well placed to assist in identifying the level of involvement of an individual in leadership and therefore which Pathway would be most appropriate. For those newly retired, the Pathway individuals take should be decided at the point they start their new role. For existing PtOs and Readers Emeriti, a formal decision based on consideration of a person's role against the above criterion would need to be made within the diocese.'

'I hope that you agree that this addresses the concerns you raise but please do come back to me if you feel we need to go further.'



Is the Church 'institutionally Racist'?

Paul Conder writes from Chester

With reference to the report 'From Lament to Action' published on 23 April, I found it a strange experience to be informed by the Archbishop of Canterbury that the section of the Body of Christ which I love and to which I owe so much is 'institutionally racist'.

In the 63 years since my ordination, and having served in all sorts of parishes in the North East, North West and South of England as well as on the staff of the theological college where Justin Welby himself was trained, that description does not correspond to my experience at all. In fact I would consider it a slur on the folk to whom I have been privileged to minister.

Granted, there are many individual grievances relating to injustice, insensitivity and even prejudice and lack of appreciation but one does not have to be a person of colour to experience those. As Archbishop Sentamu pointed out on 'Any Questions?' last year, there is only one race: the human race. I realise that even by expressing these sentiments I risk incurring trolls from the 'woke' brigade and supporters of critical race theory, but some flaws in the report need exposing.

Setting target quotas is a flawed system: ask the South African Cricket Board! Appointment to responsible bodies should be according to ability and talent, not arbitrary criteria. Suppose there is a lack of appropriate candidates for the various participatory posts envisaged. What then?

Has any thought been put into the costing and financing of these measures? Diocesan budgets are increasingly stretched, but they are supposed to provide extra posts such as Racial Justice Officers. At the same time, more and more parishes are being surrendered, their clergy not being replaced.

The recommendations read like an administrative quagmire, a bureaucratic nightmare. How much energy will be sucked out of the church's diminishing resources in this exercise?

Doubtless a number of Task Force proposals can be put into effect relatively speedily and many of them are well meaning. Overall, the flavour smacks of being politically driven, with anyone daring to point out objections finding themselves backed into an unfashionable and indefensible position.

Christopher Wardale's continuing exploration of his bookshelves is proving very helpful...

Lockdown may be easing and may indeed have been lifted altogether by the time you read this. But I am still exploring my bookshelves and have started to plumb the largely forgotten back layer on many of the shelves.

Two books which have impressed and helped me I would like to share with you. Neither of them is newly published but they both make for good reading albeit for very different reasons.

Fierce Imaginings: The Great War, Ritual, Memory and God Rachel Mann
D.L.T. 2017 ISBN 978-0-232-53278-4

Hundreds of books were written about the 1st World War as we remembered its recent centenary. I bought quite a few of them but like many books they stayed on my desk and then slipped onto the shelves unread.

I am very glad I have rediscovered this one. It is skilful weaving of family stories, cultural history, theology and fresh reading of the war poetry and literature. It presents a compelling meditation on themes of remembrance for us today. It is a tribute to the lost and never heard voices of WW1 and suggests our memories of the conflict are crucial for 'British Identity' in a world of collapsing communities and identities.

Rachel Mann takes us deep into the creative and spiritual worlds of writers whose fierce life-struggles she conjures up remarkably well. It is an intelligent, personal and provocative study of human identity and the symbols and rituals with which we seek to explore it. I enjoyed this book and have gone back to it several times. It now stands alongside my favourite book about that period – Paul Fussell's amazing volume – 'The Great War and Modern Memory'.

Living on the Border Esther de Waal
Canterbury Press 2011 ISBN 978-1-85311-962-0

In lockdown many of have felt the importance of borders and we have been careful to keep those borders safe. Now lockdowns are easing the

opening of those borders seems very strange and dare us to move out of our own comfort/safety zones.

We find ourselves at a new 'threshold' and it is time to pause so that we might best show respect to people, places, time and space. This pause gives us space and allows us to let go of the demands and expectations of 'lockdown' and prepare for the encounter with something new.

Ester de Waal understands this 'pause' and helps us to realise how important it is. Though written well before 'lockdown' this is a book written by someone who realises such 'thresholds' and values them. It is described by one reviewer as 'a spiritual and sacramental meditation playing on the borders between nature and grace, in the world of our heart and in the heart of our world.' This thin volume has helped me to adjust. I hope it helps you as well.



Simon Holloway has been reading 'Monk in the Market Place' and reviewing an unusual ministry

Ray Simpson is the 'founder guardian' of the Community of Aidan and Hilda (abbreviated to CAH in the book). This is a book that needs to be read several times as there is so much distilled wisdom and careful reflection on life, spirituality, the church, the future of our world and more.



A first reading helps us to understand the background, formation, nurture and life experiences of this 'man of God'. His life and writings almost feel like the journal of one of the prophets of God during the

decline, fall and exile of the people of Israel several centuries before Christ. Could he be perhaps a Jeremiah (he quotes from his prophecy at the start of the book) or maybe an Amos or perhaps even an Ezekiel?

He trained for Anglican ministry at the London College of Divinity in North London, which moved and became St. John's Nottingham in his last year. Michael Green was one of his tutors and two Archbishops were his contemporaries – perhaps this has inspired his choice of shirt for the photo on the cover his Autobiography. He also describes his experience of Charismatic renewal in the early part of his life.

Ray has had an interesting and varied life but one that has had clear direction and guidance from a variety of sources. Several times in his life, he has sought the advice and guidance of bishops. Some have been wise and generous, like Bishop Hugh Montefiore, who counselled him to take up the ecumenical Bible Society job in Norfolk, rather than a parish ministry in London Diocese. This travelling job in Norfolk led on to his significant appointment as pioneer ecumenical leader in Bowthorpe Church near Norwich.

After 18 years at Bowthorpe, this became the launchpad and training ground for developing new ways of being church. He helped to rediscover a Celtic model and rule of life and this eventually led on to his appointment in Lindisfarne, Holy Island. Prophetic words, visions and dreams, a soul friend and a community of seven who were the origin dreamers for CAH all helped to guide and direct Ray into his next phase of a life's calling to establish and live out a new monasticism, appropriate for the 21st Century and beyond.

Synchronicity is a word that Ray likes and uses several times in the book about experiences which have a divine resonance when heaven smiles on him and 'coincidences happen'. Some would say that it is Lady Luck but Ray acknowledges the merciful and gracious hand of God in his life. This word 'Synchronicity' is rather like 'Serendipity' and yet it comes from the world

of Jungian Psychotherapy and Ray acknowledges help in his life from various therapies and courses which explored his early years and even pre-birth ('Primal Therapy' by Dr. Lake of Clinical Theology). He was born six months after World War II began and his early months and years were not easy, even before birth. He describes his family history in a dedicated chapter about the Simpsons.

Ray has never married although he has had several offers especially in his middle years but he lived with his younger sister Sally in Bowthorpe and then lived almost a hermit's life in Lindisfarne though he has enjoyed the company of both men and women in many lands. He has travelled widely but especially to English-speaking nations such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA and Ireland, but he has a special link with Norway and Denmark because of the shared history in Lindisfarne.

He has been a prolific writer of liturgy and books about the Celtic model of Christianity, which has helped to integrate different strands and visions of the Christian faith, in a similar way to Richard Foster in his 'Streams of Renewal', which led to the Renovare movement in partnership with Bible Society. In later years, he has developed his prophetic calling '*speaking truth to power*' in the national and international context.

There is a fire in his bones and a light in his eyes, which comes across when you meet him and even from just reading his story. Ray's account is very honest and candid about his own weaknesses, disappointments, struggles, opposition and even fallouts among believers. Yet God works through jars of clay to show His glorious treasure. Indeed, we are all cracked pots but as St. Paul reminds us '*When I am weak, I am strong... His grace is sufficient for me.*' 2 Cor.4v7 & 12v9,10.



And something absolutely up to date...

***Ian Brackley* has been enjoying 'Tales from Lindford'**

By Catherine Fox. Published by Marylebone House. Pbk £12.99

This is the fourth and somewhat unexpected fourth novel in the Lindchester Chronicles series. For those who may be unfamiliar with them, these witty and insightful novels are a sort of modern Barchester.

They are set in a fictional Midlands diocese and look at the lives of those characters that inhabit the Cathedral, its city and surrounding parishes. Rowan Williams is obviously a fan of the author as he has written, "*She writes with immense compassion, unsentimental faith and an impressively undisciplined humour.*"

This novel, 'Tales from Lindford', is set in 2020 and takes us through the year as all the characters try to cope with the Covid pandemic and its restrictions on life. Catherine knows the church from the inside (her husband and father-in-law are both bishops) and a 'warts and all' approach makes this a very human and amusing read that has good pace and introduces some endearing characters. This is great bedtime reading!



With this Vision will the people flourish?

Reading my copy of the Church Times on Friday 2nd July I was very struck by the report of the Myriad church planting conference addressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury when he is reported to have said " We don't preach morality, we plant churches. We don't preach therapeutic care, we plant churches" It took me back to the Ethics paper in General Ordination Examination in 1971 and I wondered if I would have passed with that answer. After all, what did Jesus do? He preached the values of the

Kingdom, making God the Father's will known to those who encountered him; he healed those who came to him with mental, physical and spiritual ailments. The one thing he did not do, according to my theological teachers, was plant churches! Where in the Gospels does Jesus plant a church? He came to make people disciples, and to be the Saviour of humankind, I thought that was the business we were in as the Church of England. But evidently I have been wrong for nearly 50 years in ministry.

I did try to plant churches especially in the 70's through house -groups, and in the 80's trying to re-ignite the flames of faith in a church which had two vacancies of three and a half years in 10 years. After that I served in a parish where a previous incumbent had in his wisdom set up another meeting church in a hall on a Sunday morning at the same time as the service in the parish church to the detriment to the parish church congregation.

Apparently the proposal in the latest Vision and Strategy document being presented to General Synod is to create 10,000 church plants by 2030 in houses alongside our parish churches, each would be lay-led and consist of 20-30 members. That's three house churches a day! Lay-led because stipendiary clergy, apparently, are a key limiting factor in the church's mission, they cost too much. I live in one of the largest houses in the parish, I couldn't fit in 15 people comfortably in a room, let alone 20. What about planning permission if a house is going to be used regularly as a church, and what about public liability insurance, and who will be responsible for safeguarding. And what will people hear in one of these house churches, will it be the faith handed down to us or a set of personal opinions. We have been down the road of house churches in the past, some did flourish, others became areas of concern about the control of others by the leadership and heavy shepherding. The question

is can we afford to have both parish church and house church in the same place.

If we managed to get the number of new churchgoers that the report wants, upwards of 1m, we could easily fit them into our existing churches and spend the money the Church Commissioners intend to release for this latest exercise making our churches more eco-friendly for the community around as well as making the parish churches more vibrant and life giving. Where are the lay leaders going to come from? Most of the churches in the deanery I live in are struggling to fill the existing PCC and Synodical structures, and in ministry I, like others, whenever a likely lay leader emerged I was encouraging them to be ordained, with diocesan backing .

Canon John McGinley explained the thinking behind Myriad: "Lay-led churches release the church from key limiting factors. When you don't need a building and a stipend and long, costly college-based training for every leader of the church...then we can release new people to lead and new churches to form. It also releases the discipleship of people. In church planting, there are no passengers." I find this last phrase of Canon McGinley the most deplorable. This is how he regards those who when they go to church want to sit at the back, say their prayers, listen to the sermon and receive the eucharist and those who are bruised by life and are looking for a place of healing. I met many in my ministry who had been bruised by their experience of other churches in issues of inability to contribute financially, gender and sexuality, and controlling behaviour by "pastors". Where do they go in this grand new scheme of things? Especially when the housechurch has stripped the parish church of some of its most valued members. If 15 of your congregation pop down the road on a Sunday morning then there is little point in holding a service in the parish church for the remaining 5/6. It is all going to be very middle-class.

The former Dean of Exeter, Jonathan Draper, has commented: "It is ironic, of course that these proposals are being pushed by those who have presided over the church's decline and had the long and expensive theological education which they would jettison. There is nothing from the leadership of the church that reflects one their own part in that decline, their own ineptitude, bullying, sense of entitlement, and in the failure to connect with the very people they would like to see fill the houses of the sufficiently wealthy in this brave new ecclesial world"

In his comments on Myriad Giles Fraser says this " Secularisation is indeed a catastrophe for the churches. But we won't outlast this period of history by being more business-like or by adopting slicker models of evangelistic marketing. We must be more of what we are called to be – more thoughtful, more prayerful, less fearful, more obedient to God's call. We are resurrection people after all. Institutional death should hold out no horror for the faithful. And it will only be this lack of fear that can make us attractive again."

Again from Jonathan Draper "It doesn't take much research to know what the real 'limiting factors' in the life of the church are. There's a hierarchy so mostly out of touch with the rest of the country that they are ignored or mocked. There's the inability to take a meaningful stand against homophobia, gender discrimination, racism, or even its own imperial heritage. There's the utter failures in matters of safeguarding and taking victims seriously. The Church of England has become an institution impossible to defend. It's much easier to plant a church than it is to renew an institution in humility, penitence, and with grace. The 'Myriad' initiative is poor quality paper being used to cover up not just cracks, but a crumbling edifice." Some years ago now the Archbishop of Canterbury promised a new future of "radical inclusion", Myriad will not take us in that direction but to radical confusion.

Any who wish to follow up comment on this issue should read items on:

<https://modernchurch.org.uk/limiting-factors-the-myrriad-initiative-and-the-future-of-the-church>

<https://modernchurch.org.uk/martyn-percy-the-great-leap-forward-part-one-the-new-politics-of-ecclesionomics-for-the-church-of-england>

<https://unherd.com/2021/07/the-church-is-abandoning-its-flock/>

<https://archbishopcranmer.com/key-limiting-factors-the-end-of-stipendiary-parish-ministry/>

<https://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/category/opinion/> 3rd July and 7th July

Malcolm Liles



Ramblings from the Secretary

There has not been a lot coming across my desk this last 3 months. Very few people seem to be joining at present and most who do are through a personal payment rather than diocesan sourced.

I hope by now most of those of you with PTO will have been able to access the **National Clergy Register** to insert your up to date details. Some members have been in touch to say how surprised they were by some of the questions on the **Oracle** questionnaire particularly the question about faith and some of the gender and sexuality questions.

Quite a lot of concern arose out of the recent **Pensions Board**, several members contacted me about this expressing concern about the late arrival of the posting from the Board, the response of the Board was that this was only in a few areas, however this was not borne out by the broad swathe of the country reflected in my e-mails. Indeed, a member in Canada and others in Europe reported the arrival being after even the extended closing date of 24th June. Maybe

lessons will be learned from this. At the time of writing I have not seen the result reported anywhere.

A new course has been established for **Safeguarding and PTO** which recognises the different responsibilities between parish leadership and the roles played by those with PTO in retirement. It has been available in Sheffield diocese for the last 2 months and I would be interested in knowing whether it has been adopted more widely and what experiences members have had in attending it. Incidentally, Disclosure and Barring is now to last for 3 years rather than the previous 5.

Those of you who have subscribe to the Sheldon Hub website will be aware that one of its subscribers, Eva McIntyre, is setting up a private forum for those living in **CHARM** accommodation. Some members may wish to join this forum at <https://sheldonhub.org/forums/forum/privateroom/22xjyp7w> I occasionally receive correspondence from people in Charm accommodation and offer to help in resolving issues but this forum may be a way of bringing together common themes to raise with the Pensions Board. Please though, do continue letting me know of your experiences with this housing so that we can speak directly to Board representatives at our meetings twice a year.

Connect! Contemporary crises and everyday faith I see from the latest issue of Crucible that Norwich diocese has produced a series of 6 booklets of 16 pages exploring the relationship between Christian faith and some of the most pressing issues of our time. Each booklet has a one word title: Home, Work, Waste, Food, Neighbour, Nature. Whilst the examples in each booklet refer to Norfolk for local references it is the kind of thing which might usefully be taken up by parishes and dioceses in other places by making adaptations for local situations. They are available as printed copies or downloadable pdf

format from:

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/connect

This year's **Annual Meetings** are currently still happening. Our council meeting in March agreed that we should go ahead in planning these in the expectation that by September most of our members would have been vaccinated and be able to travel and attend. However, the current data would suggest increased prevalence of Covid following the relaxation of restrictions on July 19th. The southern province meeting will take place at St. Andrew's Church, Short St. near London Waterloo Station on 23rd September and the northern province meeting at Bishopthorpe, York on 30th September. Both meetings will be from 10 am to about 3.30pm but will only be viable if we have at least 30/40 members present. You are therefore invited to let me know which meeting you wish to attend before 20th August, following that date further details will be sent to you. If insufficient members feel able to attend they may be cancelled. Those attending are asked to have a negative lateral flow test before attending and to have had a double vaccination. Whilst I understand that the NHS is only currently committed to sending out free lateral flow tests till the end of July, it may be extended by the government in the light of circumstances; so the message is that you should obtain the tests before the end of July and reserve one to use in September before you travel.

You may have noticed that this newsletter is shorter than usual, this is due to a lack of copy from members not an economy measure by RCACoE!

Please let us have a note of any change of address or e-mail, we frequently have upwards of a dozen bounces because of unnotified changes.

Items for the next newsletter should be sent to Mark Rudall at markrudall@gmail.com or 108 Prospect Road, Farnborough GU14 8NS, by the middle of October.

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

Retired Clergy Association of the Church of England – www.rcacoe.org

President: Rt. Rev Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford

Chairman: Rt Rev Ian Brackley, 1 Bepton Down, Petersfield GU31 4PR ijbrackley@gmail.com

Secretary and Treasurer: Rev Malcolm Liles, 473 City Road, Sheffield S2 1GF
secretary@rcacoe.org or
malcolm.liles48@gmail.com

