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**Living Longer...**

Gillian Pickford

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**Features**

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'Dying and living' is very much a Lenten theme, and so I decided to make this the focus of some of the material in this issue. As we approach the anniversary of the beginning of World War 1, I thought I would include some material to help us understand, and respond to, the recollection of the events of that time. In turn this will help us to deal with requests we may receive to put together service materials for remembering the events of 1914 – 18. Yes, I know this period may seem a long time ago but delving into the past teaches us so much and we should know about what happened during those four years, which I believe has had a profound effect on the world we know today.

As Readers we are sometimes asked to be involved with bereaved people at the point of their need and there are some helpful reflections here too. Of course dying is something we personally have to come to terms with sooner or later, and we are very privileged to have an article from a Reader who has been diagnosed as terminally ill.

I must also say how pleased I am that there are 15 pieces written by Readers in this issue. I have been aiming to increase the number of articles from this source and I think this is an all time high! So please keep them coming. Marion Gray, chair of the editorial committee, has written an article summarising the outcomes of the questionnaire some of you kindly submitted last year. Of course the outcomes are as diverse as are those of you for whom the magazine is produced, but one thing that was common to many people was a request for more articles written by Readers. So keep them coming!

Themes for summer and autumn this year are ‘Prayer’ and ‘Perspectives’ (insights into contemporary issues) but you do not have to write on the theme. Please email me if you want to discuss an outline for a potential article. Contact information for me, and others connected with the production of the magazine, is on the facing page. You may like to know that I will be putting further articles in the magazine as we progress through recollecting the events of WW1, also known as ‘The Great War’, or, in America at that time, the ‘European War’.

Talking of anniversaries, it is now only two years until we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Reader movement. This may seem a long way ahead, but now may be the time to start thinking about how this could be done. Anniversaries have always been, and still are, part of the way we live as the people of God and through them we express our humanity and something of a sense of continuity.

Until next time!
‘Well, we’re all living longer, and that’s got to be a good thing,’ So I heard on the radio one day last year. Apart from hearing that it was a social sciences lecturer from a local university contributing to a phone-in discussion, I can’t quote any further. But it got me thinking. Is it a good thing and if so, why? If not, what do we think we are doing?

I looked at my Mum, who lives with us in a purpose-built extension to our home, sitting by the radio whilst I was in her room on some domestic errand. She was then 90, almost blind, deaf without hearing aids and unable to get up from her chair without help. For the most part, conversation was difficult. Eighteen months on, her condition has only deteriorated. Everything I shall say below is governed by my Mum’s own very clearly articulated wish that she should not be taken to hospital and that she should not go into residential care. ‘I’d rather be dead’, she has said.

When I began Reader training, I envisaged myself in a preaching and teaching ministry, leading the ministry of the word parts of the service, leading informal services whilst others filled in the music and artistic parts, I would do the speaking and the hermeneutics. I had never seen myself celebrating communion, and this was my rationale for presenting as a Reader candidate rather than for ordination. Eight years on, my ministry has taken a very different course from that which I expected.

One of the early tasks in my licensed ministry was to take communion to local care homes. I’d also got my name on the home communion rota and regularly visited two or three elderly people. I’d seen myself much more on the big stage, but this, I felt, was a good training ground and it was teaching me more about pastoral and sacramental ministry than I had hitherto been aware. Shortly after I was licensed, my Mum had the first of a series of small strokes or TIA’s, each of which left her more and more incapacitated. When she became confined to her chair after the third incident, I had to ask myself how I could minister to others while neglecting my own, and so, for the time being, that aspect of ministry dried up. I began to talk to Mum about the sacraments and, finally, she asked to be confirmed. Wheelchair-bound at 91 years she came before the Bishop at Easter last year.

Now my Latin is almost non-existent so I rely on Ramsey’s interpretation of this advice which is attributed to Pope Clement VI for when one is, as Ramsey puts it, beginning to say ‘Do I really have to do this?’ or ‘I cannot stick this much longer’.

Volo quid quid vis,  
Volo quia vis  
Volo quomodo vis  
Volo quamdiu vis

Quidquid means, if God wills it, however tiresome it may be, God’s presence will be in it.

Quia, if God wills it, this becomes the motive for doing it.

Quomodo, the how of doing a thing is in God’s hands, so we might find we...
are doing it not in the way we have planned it for ourselves. This I found difficult because, well, after all, I’m good at planning things and isn’t that a God-given talent? Why wasn’t God letting me do things how I thought was best?

The hardest to bear has been Quamdiu, I must be ready to bear this for as long as God wills that I should. For some weeks after another incident, and bearing in mind that God ‘will not let me be tested beyond my strength’ (1 Cor 10:13), I thought that Mum was somehow getting ‘thinner’ rather like the idea of ‘thin’ places where much prayer takes place, a closeness developing between heaven and earth.

I mentioned this to Christians of different ages, including a priest of very many years standing, most of whom nodded kindly in agreement with my interpretation that perhaps the end was getting nigh. One however said ‘Oh yes, I know, my Mum was like that for three years!’ At a high point in my frustration, I talked to another dear friend whose mother had lived dependently until a few weeks short of her 100th birthday. ‘Yes, I know’ she said. ‘It’s all going on around you and you feel like nobody in the middle of it all’.

I turned to my Bible. What does it say about ageing, about growing old and drawing to the end of life? Surprisingly little. In Joshua 23:2, that great character gathers the elders of the people before him and says ‘I am now old and well advanced in years’ and he goes on to speak of the Lord’s faithfulness in all he has promised. In verse 14 he tells them ‘And now I am about to go the way of all the earth…’ with a confidence and expectation that his life’s work is done and he can hand over to those who come after him. As long as they continue in obedience, the Lord will be with the nation he has led. On the other hand, the notable account of one who asks for his life to be extended (Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20), this leads only to disaster for the whole nation resulting from that king’s foolishness during his additional time.

Jesus, while asking if the cup might be foolishness during his additional time.

The age-old Christian maxim of ‘do unto others’ requires us to ask ‘would I want to give that seemingly interminable task of caring for me (my body, mainly) to anyone else, paid or unpaid? My children are already asking if this is what I expect them to do for me in the future, compromising their chosen careers and putting their own families second. Is it fair for any parent to ask for this sacrifice?’

In the past few months the amount of care we have bought in from carers coming to the house has increased dramatically. This has brought me into relationship with quite a large number of carers, 22 in five months so far. I have encountered some truly tremendous people, utterly dedicated and prepared to give of their all in service of others. I have listened to their struggles, their joys and concerns (often about the inadequacy of the rotas they are expected to work to), the prescribed working methods and modern practice versus long years of experience [eg – younger carers are often more concerned with wearing gloves than with finding out if the bed sheets are wet!]

And now this routine has settled down I find that Mum often has far more conversation with the carers than she does with me. Our paths are perhaps too well worn. Our teenage son has wearied of having to explain to Grandma who he is, and no longer entertains her with stories of what he has done when he gets in from school.

My children are already asking if this is what I expect them to do for me in the future, compromising their chosen careers and putting their own families second.

I wonder if maintaining life is every bit an attempt at playing God as taking it away, although how one determines the line between them is way beyond my knowledge and experience.

There have undoubtedly been high points, and the joy of meeting and greeting others in town when we go out to the shops with the wheelchair has been gracious. I have become much more aware of other wheelchair users and the obstacles which impede them. I also feel much more empathy with carers and the care situation, because having looked after Mum for extended periods of time I have felt the fatigue and exasperation brought on by the relentless nature of the demands.

I do think that my experience from the past few years has given me a compassion for carers who struggle with the issues of ageing and care provision that I did not have before. Even if, at times, like Bob Geldof, compassion fatigue makes me want to run away.

But is this really what God intends for me to do?  

Strange that dying and living are the most ordinary things in the world, and yet they concern and disturb us so. Every creature – every plant, human, animal, bird, fish, insect – lives and dies; from the tiny insignificant book mite that creeps barely discerned across the page as you read, to something as big as a star. Life’s impermanence surely makes it precious; every fleeting minute to be savoured, the chance to be here on this beautiful planet.

It moved me beyond expressing to see the Nasa image of Earth that Voyager 1 captured as it turned to take one last look back before leaving our solar system for the last time: Earth, a pale blue dot in a sunbeam. For me, too (and for you), the day will come to take one last look, and then leave forever. I cannot imagine it – can you? I can’t begin to frame any idea of eternal life that does not include the grass wet with rain in the early morning, the smoke of incense rising at worship through the sun slanting in at the window, the sound of a blackbird’s first experimental notes in the rising day, the soughing of the wind in great trees, the flung spray and boom of the waves in the autumn tides, the purity of snowfall before a foot has touched it, the blue of midsummer. What does life mean, if it does not mean that?

I have resolved to live in recollection that one day I will die; not to miss a single minute of the glory, the passion, the beauty, the wonder – even the pain.

But for many people, those ordinary, core features of being – life and death – create unease. Distraction by any means is sought; shopping and television, drawing about oneself a comforting nest of possessions and a cushion of money, concern with image and appearance, status and power. Being distracted from life, we fear death; but as Virgil said: ‘Death twitches my ear; Live’ he says... ‘for I’m coming.’

I believe that if we learn to really live, we shall no longer fear to die: because death is not the opposite of life or the end of life. Life is eternal. The opposite of death is birth. Life contains death – death does not end it. We are born, and we die, but we belong to eternity, and eternity is the stuff of our souls. In the words of Raymond Rossiter: ‘Life is eternal; and love is immortal; and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.’

And yet it is a momentous horizon, because it is the moment when, like Voyager 1, we take one last look back before leaving this solar system forever. Maybe that is what we fear – the unimaginable.

Meanwhile, as we make the journey, we meet death in many forms, emerging time to a deepening experience of life. And this is true even within what we ordinarily call ‘life’ – the span of our time here on Earth. ‘It’s time to go... isn’t it?’ There was such sadness for her in accepting that this ordinary living – her family, her home, the comfortable day-to-day realities of a cup of tea and an armchair by the fire – had finally reached their end. Even though she was weak and tired and confused, it was hard to let go, a sorrow.

And just as death is a form of bereavement, so also bereavement is a kind of death. The person who must watch his wife die also loses something of himself. He will not be the same without her. He must re-learn life itself. He will not be the same without his love died last summer, in the last weeks she lingered here, she said to her daughter: ‘It’s time to go... isn’t it?’ There was such sadness for her in accepting that this ordinary living – her family, her home, the comfortable day-to-day realities of a cup of tea and an armchair by the fire – had finally reached their end. Even though she was weak and tired and confused, it was hard to let go, a sorrow.

In being a companion to people who are terminally ill, it is important to recognise that they are being bereaved of life, of themselves. Everything they know; all who are dear to them, as well as facing the inherent challenges of dying which may include pain and disability, nausea or disorientation, financial difficulties and the problems of organising care.

Travelling with someone who is nearing the end of life, offering practical support may be welcome and helpful – doing what is necessary to ensure their comfort and
care – but also offering support to their bereaved self, as they process the loss they are experiencing.

A frequently encountered aspect of the last weeks of life is rapid change. Plans become difficult. An appointment is set for next week and by the time the day comes, the person feels sick, or in pain, or things have simply moved on and it is no longer appropriate. A friend arranges to call in tomorrow – then arrives to find the person too drowsy for more than three minutes’ conversation, or involved in a care procedure or bathroom visit that will take a long time. Aids like a bedpan, a walking frame or wheelchair are ordered and collected and then never used, because the time for them has gone by. Being the companion of someone who is dying asks of us flexibility, that we be adaptable and accepting. We must be willing to go with the flow of what is happening now, today, not trying to impose our planned strategies or play out our imagined scenarios.

Being alongside people who are dying, one should not make assumptions. The best gift we can offer is spaciousness: the time to listen, and wait; the willingness to respond and understand. To impose nothing, but accept and observe, to be comfortable with silence and able to sit quietly, keeping watch, kind and calm.

Since everybody dies – but not just special, trained people with families and friends primed for the task of companion – naturally many find themselves feeling hopelessly at a loss as they make the unnerving journey. In particular, many people definitely feel unqualified to offer spiritual care, regarding this as the province of the chaplain, the parish priest or pastoral visitor. However, in a situation of rapid change, it is usually those who offer intimate care everyday who are best placed to offer spiritual care, and to whom the person facing death is likely to turn. The raw intimacy of holding someone’s vomit bowl, or washing them, or helping them with the toilet, has the effect of dissolving barriers. The ones providing such care are most likely to hear the confession of fear or despair, to call in tomorrow – then arrives to find the person too drowsy for more than

There was such sadness for her in accepting that this ordinary living – her family, her home, the comfortable day-to-day realities of a cup of tea and an armchair by the fire – had finally reached their end.

He spoke honestly, and I understood how he felt, but I think he may have made the mistake of believing that somehow I did not feel helpless in the company of people facing death, of course I did! To sit with a young woman whose body is wrenched with the pain of muscular spasms, or with a refined middle-aged headmistress struggling with incontinence, or with someone who today is even too weak to lift the pointer to the picture board and has lost the power to tell us what she wants – how could one not feel helpless?

This is the time when we discover that to the helpless, our own sense of helplessness is a gift; we are not superior, we are all in this together.

When my husband Bernard was dying, one of our best travelling companions was his dearest friend Mike, who often came so I could go out for an hour or two without leaving Bernard alone. Mike would bring a book to read, and just sit quietly at Bernard’s side. If Bernard wanted to talk, he was there; if not, he read his book. And when it was time to go, he would stoop, and leave a little kiss on Bernard’s brow, saying ‘Goodbye, old friend.’ Such simple, gentle presence brought great peace. This is spiritual care.

If ever you are called on to keep company with someone who is dying, do not be afraid – even of your own helplessness and inadequacy. The best gift is your quietness and your kindness.

Pen Wilcock’s book Spiritual Care of Dying and Bereaved People found its way into most hospice libraries, and in 2013 a substantially revised and expanded version of it was published by BRF, the original material based on Pen’s years as part of a hospice chaplaincy team now benefiting from the addition of reflections on the death of her husband, and on bereavement through other causes than death, as well as a section on how to prepare and conduct a funeral.

Pen Wilcock spent a number of years as part of a hospice chaplaincy team and is the author of a book on bereavement.
Where there is life there is inevitably death. We will all encounter death in our lives, if only our own. It is not something that we can escape; it is not something most people are comfortable talking about and until we encounter it either in others or ourselves, we cannot predict how we will cope. At times of death people often turn to God for help, comfort and support, and there are others for whom the experience of a death or their approaching death makes them question their faith and God himself. For me, life and death have been a constant presence in my adult life and ultimately the things that made me question God and faith but also brought me closer to Him and shaped my ministry.

I had wanted to be a nurse since a prolonged hospital stay at the age of three when the nurses put me in charge of singing to the babies, if only to stop me following them around asking questions all day! The desire to nurse never left me and since I had been raised knowing I was a child of God I was vaguely aware that maybe it was what He wanted me to be too. As I grew up I felt that nursing was the only job for me, my mum called it a vocation not a job. She said that you had to have empathy and compassion to be a good nurse, that has stuck with me and I still believe that you cannot enter nursing just because it is a career choice. It has to be a heart choice; you have to have a heart for dealing with people at the most vulnerable points in their life because you care and want to ease their pain and soothe their brow. This is not something you can do well if your heart is not in it and I believe that it is God who chooses nurses to tend his flock and it is indeed a true calling. However, as much of a calling it may be, nurses need to have educational qualifications, even way back when I trained! So I studied hard, selected the subjects that would lead me to nursing school and at 18 I started my nurse training at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool, 150 miles away from my family and friends in Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire.

At this time I had not been to church in a while but I still had my faith, my childlike faith that questioned nothing. My only experience of suffering and death had been old pets who died and my Grandma who was unwell when she died. So when, as a young student nurse, I started to experience the death of the children in my care and the suffering that many of them endured, some at their parents’ hands I was outraged – ‘why?’ Why was my God, my loving God allowing this terrible suffering in these innocents? We were all in tears, we had never done this before but I was the nurse in charge

Why was he causing so much grief and heartache to these parents? I had never shouted and ranted at God before – it wasn’t the done thing – but boy did I rant then, I was so angry with him but I still felt guilty for feeling that way towards God Almighty.
Why was I so confused? Because as a child when my pets and Grandma died loving adults in my family, and our local vicar, told me they had died because God wanted them back to live with him – I never questioned it as a child. Now, suddenly confronted with the death of children, it made me hate God for taking their little smiles away from their families – surely God would not cause this much pain if he truly loved us? It was with a heavy heart full of rage and hate for God that I went to a local church, St Mary West Derby, Liverpool, and sought out the Rector to help me with these questions and pain I was now carrying. I am, and will be, eternally grateful for his counsel and support as I worked out what God's purpose was in all this suffering I was witnessing. I finally concluded, of course, that God does not cause suffering, pain and death but works with the pain to bring something positive in each situation – this realisation changed my view of death forever.

It allowed me to move from sick children's nursing to Neonatal Intensive Care. Here the miracle of life was a daily occurrence; when you understand the complexity of the development of a human embryo from just two tiny cells through to the angelic newborn in your arms it is a true miracle that so many are born healthy with fingers and toes in all the right places. During my years nursing in Neonatal Intensive Care Units I was privileged to be involved in so many deliveries and new lives full of potential, each of them a special, individual miracle but also in so many early, tragic deaths of those same precious little lives. Over time you learn to cope with the heartache but never get used to it as so many people assume; however, I am lucky, I have my faith and my God to support me and those whom he sent to fulfil that purpose for him. A particular vicar came to the Special Care Baby Unit where I was working, to baptise a baby whose life support was to be turned off as he had inoperable heart defects. I was six months qualified, a newbie nurse, new to the unit but was the most senior nurse on duty – I knew no better when the consultant spoke to the parents and then left the unit, taking his junior colleagues with him, leaving the nurses to turn off the machine and remove the breathing tube keeping this poor little mite alive. We were all in tears, we had never done this before but I was the nurse in charge – it fell to me, so I pulled myself together and went into the baby's room visibly trembling with fear. The vicar, who had never faced this situation before either, knew what I had to do so he took my hand and together we turned off the ventilator 'so we are doing it together in God's strength' he said – another man of God I shall owe a debt of gratitude to forever.

It is a surreal feeling to hold a fresh little life in your hands as it emerges into the world and takes its first life giving breath and then to be the hand that terminates those same breaths and bring about the baby's death.

That was twenty three years ago now but the memory remains so vivid and fresh in my mind that it still evokes all those feelings that I felt then. It felt like I was playing God – ending that precious little life but it informed my understanding because, like God, I wasn't choosing to end a life on purpose and I didn't want his family to suffer but I finally understood that death is a form of healing – because that little tiny body wasn't able to be restored to health as we know it but was healed to fullness of life in the eternal kingdom of his creator. I can almost hear you shouting 'of course, it's obvious' at these pages, and to me, now older and wiser is it – but few of us are faced with the stark reality of explaining the positive in a child's death to ourselves, let alone the bewildered, devastated parents seeking answers that are just not there.

When I look back on that episode and the many others like it that followed I am surprised I was able to continue with my career but I am convinced that God was a continuous guiding presence throughout strengthening my vocation each time such situations arose.

When, after years of longing for a child and the infertility and the heartache it brought that was at times sometimes too much to bear, I thought of bringing it to an end by my own hand. I experienced my own little miracle: God blessed my husband and I with a child that modern technology and science hadn't been able to enable. I was so grateful to him and felt indebted, how could I ever repay such a gift of love, such grace? So in a misguided attempt to repay God's goodness I started to get involved in church life, a practical involvement doing teas and fairs but this did not seem to fulfil me so I became involved on a more spiritual level – readings and intercessions. Then I had to leave full time employment for more ad hoc work to suit family life but it was during this time when I was not so busy I finally felt called by God to something deeper and after talks with my rector I applied for Reader training and was accepted. I carried on experiencing the cycle of birth and death in my nursing career and each encounter continued, through God, to shape me. I no longer felt uncomfortable or awkward around the death of children and their families – my biggest anxiety and struggle now was balancing medical and Christian ethics; for example just because medical technology allows us to prolong life – should we? Are we sometimes not prolonging life but just postponing death and increasing suffering? I still struggle with these questions because there are no black and whites in this debate, just many grey areas.

It is those little lives and big losses that have made me think and examine my relationship with God and his relationship with us.

I am now privileged to be a Hospital Chaplain. Having my Reader's licence helped tick the boxes on the application but the resources that I draw on most are those accumulated through 26 years as a nurse, working with hundreds of families during their joys and sorrows. It is those life experiences that have shaped how my ministry has evolved, those encounters that enable me to come into situations now as a minister of faith. It is those little lives and big losses that have made me think and examine my relationship with God and his relationship with us. It is this that allows me to sit comfortably alongside families and be there to help them explore their feelings and anger with God. In fact I encourage them to do that – ranting at God without the guilt as I never questioned it as a child. Now, I feel in doing so – God may be almighty and all powerful but I know that He is also tender enough to take our anger and grief because at least we are still talking to Him. It is when we are silent that we lose our relationship with him and, in my humble opinion, our relationship with God is of paramount importance in coming to terms with our loss and accepting that God knows our pain and that in His mercy our loved ones are resting in the arms of our loving Father in his eternal kingdom.

Tracie Dunsby is a Reader at St Mary's Church, West Derby, Liverpool; a member of the Chaplaincy team at Aintree University Hospital, Liverpool; and a Registered Sick Children's Nurse.
Saying ‘Boo’ to the last taboo

Helen Winnifrith
who is terminally ill, is a Reader in the Diocese of Coventry

Of the various subjects which could claim to be the last taboo – incest, dementia, paedophilia – most are regularly explored in the media, and some don’t have immediate relevance in our everyday lives. However death and dying are certainties for every human being, and yet are not usually considered suitable topics for consideration or conversation. The vast number of self-help books stick to bland areas (how to de-clutter your house), abstract principles (how to manage people better), or cheelier topics (how to bring up a contented toddler). Why is this? And why, when Christians firmly believe that after death we shall be in a place of love and joy with our Lord, do we seem not to discuss that reality often, or to share it with others around us who might then ‘catch’ our belief and so feel free to contemplate their own deaths without terror and denial?

I deeply want to encourage people to be more open about death and dying, and I write this article from a personal perspective of fairly imminent death. In 2012, aged 64, fit and well, with a husband and a big, complicated family including 16 young grandchildren, I was diagnosed with incurable lung cancer and told it was ‘months not years, probably.’ This was bad, sad news for us all. Twenty months on, the prognosis remains the same, but with huge support from my husband, family, friends, church, and cancer charities I remain physically well (30 lengths in the pool, frequent 8 mile walks) and have found ways of living well with the prospect of death on the near horizon. Prayer, holidays, beetroot juice are all part of our coping strategy, and my special mantra is ‘live each day fully and trust God.’

As a Reader, I continue to preach and lead services, but a new and special part of my ministry is now encouraging others to explore hopes, beliefs and fears about their own deaths. This is quite different from bereavement work. It is trying to reclaim the ars moriendi of the middle ages, the art of dying, which has been lost in our culture. People used to learn to contemplate the day of their death and to prepare themselves for that day of birth into a new life. Our sermons may mention eternal life, but do we give our congregations and our unchurched neighbours the opportunity to engage with the reality of our Christian belief in eternal life, and to bear its healing and sweet-tasting fruit? Muriel Spark, the perceptive novelist who wrote much about death, said ‘Every day we should practise the remembrance of death because there is no other practice which so intensifies life. Death… should be part of the full expectancy of life. Without an ever-present sense of death life is insipid. You might as well live on the whites of eggs.’

I’ve been holding house groups to look forward to our deaths. We’ve held three sessions, each taking two afternoons or evenings, and I have two more planned outside the parish. Each has been a surprisingly fascinating and productive time (much laughter, maybe a tear or two) sharing hopes, fears and concerns about our own deaths. Often when people want to talk about death, others put up barriers to make that conversation hard or impossible: ‘Please don’t be so morbid- let’s change the subject’… ‘Oh, it’s much too soon to think about your will’. So it was helpful and refreshing to talk together about various aspects of death. We were inspired and encouraged by each other’s faith and experiences. As one person put it, ‘I found satisfaction and contentment in being able to talk about death with people I could trust’. Another said her fear of death had shrunk. We discussed what kind of death seems a ‘good death’; whether we fear death and what we could do about such fear; our beliefs and doubts and questions about afterlife and heaven; what we still want time for; what might we regret having done or not having done. We also looked at some practical ways we might choose to prepare for death (de-clutter so as not to leave a muddle; make a will? consider power of attorney and an advance decision (formerly living will)? plan our funeral? record our life in photos or pictures or writing?)

It would be great to hold similar groups in a secular setting, and this could have evangelism opportunities. ‘Death cafes’, an American secular initiative which has spread to the UK (www.deathcafe.com), do something similar. Around the country people have responded to posters and website invitations to come to discuss death while sharing tea and cake. It would be good if Christians were promoting such gatherings.

Readers seem ideally placed to help Christians and others to explore their attitudes to death. We may have the words and ears to take away the sting of death by ministering to the terminally ill. We may be able to help healthy people of any age to come nearer to the prayer of Bishop Ken’s hymn: ‘Teach me to live that I may dread the grave as little as my bed.’ (Glory to thee my God this night) We can share our conviction that ‘neither death nor life… can separate us from the love of God’ and this may be one very special way we can walk the talk.

Before we say Goodbye Ray Simpson

Eternal Life! Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem Hans Küng:

Turn my Mourning into Dancing: Finding Hope in Hard Times Henri Nouwen Compiled and edited by Timothy Jones.
It was absolutely splendid: the carriage, the jet black horses, the piper, a superabundance of flowers and pictures. Sometimes the amount of ‘trimmings’ seem in inverse proportion to the degree of faith and one can feel like a walk-on part in someone else’s production.

Almost all the funerals I take are for families with no church connection. It may be the only time they will have a significant contact with Christians: but how to make it truly significant? I usually feel frustrated because it is vital that I make more contact.

Yes, I can try to be sensitive when I visit: listen, remember details, pray with them, encourage them to choose words and music that are meaningful, but how far to accommodate them?

Challenges include poems from the internet and how to respond to that ‘folk religion’ with friends reunited even when there’s no acknowledged belief in God?

Yes, I can try to conduct the service with warmth, gentleness and efficiency; I can explain the Christian hope of forgiveness, resurrection and eternal life as simply and clearly as I can. But I’m aware that much of the language of the liturgy is completely foreign to most of my congregation.

Yes, I can faithfully follow up the family; offer help, pray, send an anniversary card, an invitation to the ‘Remembering’ service, but usually there’s no response. Soon I’ll pass them in the street and not remember who they are. Despite my best attempts, I fear they’ve not yet had a proper chance to hear and respond to the love of God.

It could be said that there are seven elements of a funeral: disposal of a corpse; marking a death; affirming a life; commendation; proclaiming faith; grieving and cultural mirroring. It is a complex process.

One funeral director commented that families who have a church service seem to ‘cope’ better, even when they’re not people of faith. Why is this? Is there something about the whole ambience of a church which conveys a sense of otherness providing a bigger framework in which to locate and make sense of this major event? Does it give a sense of the numinous which ministers to people even if words are not understood? Is it that the ritual itself lends dignity and worth to a life? Does it all suggest a place which has marked beginnings and endings over centuries and so suggests continuity?

If so, we have a head start: but what more would it take for our funerals to be truly life-giving?

If you have any thoughts or experiences you would like to send in response to the questions raised, please email the editor at reader.editor@btconnect.com. Please confine your response to 250 words unless you are thinking of contributing a full length article in which case please email the editor to discuss the possibility.
Provided your family has roots in Britain that go back a century, you are almost certain to have had a relative who was killed or injured in World War One. We are talking about the generation of our grandparents or great-grandparents, when families were large. There is a high chance that you had a great-uncle or great-great-uncle who lost his life in the war. He may rarely have been discussed or even mentioned by those who knew him, because the pain of bereavement never really goes away, especially when the person who died was in the prime of life. It is now a century since the outbreak of the First War, so perhaps it is a good time to remember those whom we never knew, but who meant so much to our forebears.

In my Last Word piece at the end of this magazine, I reflect on the way in which God uses the mess caused by humankind through war to bring at least some good out of evil. But it is easy to generalise, and we need also to remember that each individual life matters to God. It is salutary to remember that all wars arise as a result of human sin, and to pray ‘Lord, forgive’ because of our collective guilt, even though our own nation’s participation may have been entirely justifiable.

During the years when I was teaching, and in those since, I have made a good many journeys to the north of France to visit the battlefields of the First World War – and on occasion I have gone with people who have a deliberate itinerary, to visit a particular family grave or memorial, to pray for their departed relation, and to give thanks for his life. The experience is still very moving, especially when one stands alongside where a relative and his comrades lie, with nothing to disturb the silence except the birdsong and the breeze. I would encourage you all to consider making such a trip, and to treat it as a combination of holiday, history lesson and, above all, pilgrimage.

Firstly, find out where your relations are buried. There may be some research needed to find out correct names and so on – but the very oldest of your family members are likely to know the names of uncles who died in the trenches, even though they will never have known them in person. Then go to the Commonwealth War Graves website (www.cwgc.org) which lists the names of every casualty and where they are buried, or on which memorial they are commemorated if they have no known grave.

After this, you are round to the practicalities of planning a trip. Many of the cemeteries are off the beaten track, so a tour by car makes the most sense. The visit there will be the high point of the journey, but there are a number of other places that should be included on the itinerary, to make sense of what the combatants had to undergo. Which of these it is most appropriate to visit will depend to some extent on where your relation is buried or remembered – but you should try to include at least one of the places mentioned in each category below:

### MAJOR MEMORIALS
1. **The Menin Gate**, Ypres.
2. **The Memorial to the Fallen of the Somme**, Thiepval.

The Menin Gate is better known because of the ceremony of remembrance, including the Last Post which takes place every evening. The memorial at Thiepval is absolutely gigantic and the silence of its situation creates for me the stronger impression – but my great uncle’s name is carved on it. He was one of the ‘missing of the Somme’. The pictures of many others appear on the wall of the small adjacent museum. They are ‘mug shots’, and if you imagine the faces above t-shirt and jeans rather than military khaki serge it brings

### MAJOR MUSEUMS
1. **In Flanders Fields Museum**, Cloth Hall, Grote Markt, Ypres.
2. **Historial de la Grande Guerre**, Château de Peronne, Peronne.

I personally find the museum in Peronne to be the better of the two, and both are splendidly laid out, with everything explained in English as well as French, Flemish and German. The video presentations are first-rate. Both give a thoroughly objective understanding of the politics behind the war as well as the horrors of the fighting. Both museums are quiet places, and prayer is not at all out of place.
home just how ordinary these thousands of lost young men were.

LARGE ALLIED CEMETERIES
1. Tyne Cot, near Passchendaele.
2. Delville Wood Cemetery, Longueval, east of Albert.

The vast cemetery at Tyne Cot contains over 12,000 allied graves with a small museum attached. On the wall is a heart-rending quotation from a young woman whose fiancé is buried there. Delville Wood is one of the largest cemeteries in the Somme battlefield, where more than half the graves are unidentified and marked simply ‘Known unto God’. Such graves are especially moving, and tell us that each lost life was nonetheless of infinite value to its creator God.

GERMAN CEMETERIES
1. Langemarck Cemetery.
2. Neuville St Vaast Cemetery, north-west of Arras.

Both these cemeteries are huge, reminding us that the enemy sustained huge losses too. I find the graves of Jewish soldiers (easily distinguished because Christian crosses etc. are inappropriate) to be the most poignant in view of what happened later in Germany under the Nazis. At Langemarck, four unidentified stone military figures stand guard just beyond a low hedge at the cemetery’s boundary, as a sort of eternal representation of those who died, looking down on our attempts at repentance and remembrance.

TUNNELS
1. Wellington Quarry, Arras.
2. Vimy Ridge, adjacent to the Canadian National Memorial.

The tunnels at Wellington Quarry, approached incongruously by the access road to a supermarket car park, give a good idea of the claustrophobic atmosphere of tunnel warfare – but they were actually primarily used for storage. At Vimy the tunnels are not so deep, but groups venture underground with their Canadian guide, and a good impression of battle conditions can be gained.

TRENCHES

Many of the small museums throughout the battlefields have restored or mock-up trenches, but these are necessarily somewhat ‘sanitised’. Trenches are better appreciated where they were originally dug, out in the fields, even if they have become less obvious through the years.

1. If you go to the tunnels at Vimy, go through the trenches there as well. The young Canadian guides are absolutely excellent at explaining everything to visitors.

2. The memorial at Beaumont-Hamel, coincidentally also Canadian, allows you to visit both Allied and German trenches, and to understand just how close they were to one another.

CRATERS
1. Lochnagar Crater situated just off the Albert-Bapaume road.
2. Zivy Crater, Thelus, near Neuville-St Vaast.

Lochnagar crater is the ‘must-see’ one. It was created by the largest man-made explosion in history at the time of its detonation. Many German tunnellers were killed at the time, but the body of a British soldier, probably one of those who laid the charge, was discovered near the rim in 1988 and accorded a full military funeral. This still happens now, conducted by Army Chaplains in the way they would have held the service a century ago, whenever a farmer unearths remains in the battlefields area. Two craters, including the one at Zivy, have been incorporated into a war cemetery.

SMALL MUSEUMS

These abound throughout the area. Rather too many seem to display simply a collection of rusted artefacts that have been dug up locally, along with a few documents, all put together for the tourist market. But most are still worth a visit. Two of the best are

2. Albert Museum, beside the basilica.

Unless the distance renders it utterly impossible, I reckon that any trip to the battlefields should end with a visit to the Clairière de l’Armistice. This is a clearing in the forest to the east of Compiègne where the armistice was signed in 1918. There is a large statue to Marshal Foch, whom the French regard as the hero who brought the eventual victory. It faces an enormous horizontal granite plinth on which is recorded in triumphalist language the fact that at this place, the German empire succumbed to the might of France and her allies. A short distance away is another sculpture featuring a German eagle, skewered on a sword.

All this is important, because it sets the First War in context. The triumphalism of 1918 can be seen by the eye of history as having been premature. You don’t need to look very closely at the huge granite stone to realise that at some point an attempt has been made to blow it up. That attempt was made by the Nazis in 1940, when France capitulated to Hitler. For the same reason the railway carriage in the adjacent museum is only a replica of the one used by Foch in 1918. The original was carted off to Berlin in 1940 as a trophy of war where it was later destroyed, probably by ‘enemy action’ – that is by us!

The museum makes no attempt to gloss over the events of 1940. A whole room is devoted to Hitler’s visit. This begs various questions. How justified was World War 1 in the first place? Was the Kaiser really that evil? If the allies had been more magnanimous in their treatment of Germany in 1918, would Hitler ever have achieved such popularity? As the centenary of the various events of the Great War is marked, historians will no doubt fall over themselves to re-interpret the significance of the war and its consequences, although they need to remember that a proper evaluation of what has happened is rarely possible close to the events – so those who met at Compiègne in 1918 may have an excuse.

The Church of England was no more certain about what the war really signified. One result was that the absolute monarchies of Germany, Russia and the Austro-Hungarian empire all ceased to exist. At the time this created a series of political vacuums. Democracy, communism and fascism all seemed to have equal and valid claims to be the new style of government the world was looking for to replace the emperors and tzars. In the 1920s, the Church of England had at least one bishop in favour of fascism, and another who promoted communism. We can see with hindsight that both were misguided – but how valuable hindsight can be! Might we now be acting in ways which future generations will regard as wrong to such an extent that they will not be able to understand how we could possibly have ever thought otherwise?

Then remember once more the serried rows of graves in France. Those who lie there were just as human then as we are now and acted for right, irrespective of what later historical analysis might suggest. We will remember them. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Dr Alan Wakely is a Reader and the Secretary of CRC. He is also an historian who has taught both the 19th and 20th centuries, specialising in Victorian Church History.
I am sitting in a Belgian garden looking at the lush lawn and admiring the summer flowers, listening to the cooing of a dove, the gentle cluck of neighbouring chickens and watching the insects. It is so quiet I can hear the splash of the water feature 50 yards away. At that distance is another guest walking the bottom lawn as if it were a labyrinth. She stops, occasionally to smell a flower, watch a bird or just turn her face to the sun; this garden has been called ‘the largest room in the house’ and it, and the house behind me, are both listed buildings monitored by Monumental Care (the equivalent of English Heritage).

Here is a man and his young son doing the history tour, and a lone American, happy to share a joke. So what is this place?

When the First War broke out in August 1914 there was a widely held belief that the argument would be over by Christmas. This illusion was quickly shattered as the troops began to dig into the sticky clay of Flanders to create trenches.

The town of Poperinge (often called Pops by the troops) lies about nine miles from Ieper (or Ypres) and according to a pre-war guide book the town had ‘no features of interest for the visitor.’ However this non-descript place became the rail head for troops and equipment going up and down the line to Ypres. Each day thousands of soldiers passed through, the lucky ones going on well earned leave. The town ‘had an odd, but not an evil atmosphere’ which was quite relaxed and along with its numerous bars, restaurants, brothels and shops the spirit of light heartedness was never quenched, which led many exhausted soldiers arriving in this non-descript town to believe that they had reached Paris!

A young army chaplain by the name of Philip Clayton arrived in Poperinge in the autumn of 1915. This young chaplain was ‘a pair of spectacles with large black-rimmed glasses; a short, substantial figure; a rather innocent expression on a kindly face – and buttons persisting in coming off,’ Clayton was tasked by the senior chaplain, Neville Talbot, to open a place of relaxation for the troops.
With the help of Colonel Reginald May of the 6th Division ‘Tubby’ approached the Town Major who introduced them to a wealthy hop merchant and brewer of the town, M Coevoet-Camerlynck. The family had evacuated their imposing residence as it had been damaged by shell fire so they leased it to the army for 150 francs a month on condition that the property was made weather-proof. The engineers soon repaired the damaged walls and roof whilst the necessary equipment and furnishings were requisitioned.

Colonel May insisted that the house should be called Talbot House. Neville objected strongly but he was told that the premises would be closed forthwith if they insisted on calling it Church House. Tubby was delighted because he felt the name had ‘the homely flavour of a village inn, and for its deeper note there was the thought of the commemoration of Neville’s brother, Gilbert Talbot’, who had been killed in July of that year. The house was opened officially on 11 December 1915 and was open to all, regardless of rank. It has been described as ‘an oasis of serenity in a world gone mad.’ As I have already mentioned, the house had a huge garden and it was ‘Tubby who called it ‘the largest room’. Talbot House was quickly reduced to T.H which in the Signallers phonetic alphabet became Toc H.

As these premises were ‘church property’ they were open to all. A sign still hangs above the front door stating ‘Every Man’s Club 1915 - ?’. The chaplain’s room has a sign misquoting Dante ‘All rank abandon ye who enter here.’ Tubby wrote that he recalled one afternoon tea party which comprised of a General, a Staff Captain, a Second Lieutenant and a Canadian Private! Tubby also recalls an occasion in the chapel when a young soldier stood aside to allow ‘a great General’ to go to the communion rail first, the general pushed him forward and whispered ‘Not here, lad; not here.’ Tubby later wrote ‘to lose that spirit would not have helped to win the war, but would have made it less worth winning.’

This attitude was unheard of in the Army and many found it difficult to understand. On one occasion two Tommies had a short leave pass and headed for Poperinge so a friend suggested they should visit Talbot House. On reaching the main square they headed up the road towards this place, but as they rounded the bend they saw a senior officer entering the building. Thinking their friend had set them up for trouble they returned dejected to the square planning what they would do to their ‘friend’ when they returned to duty. Standing forlorn in the square, trying to decide which estaminet would be the best a young chaplain approached and asked the problem. They explained and he suggested they follow him – back to the very door the Officer had recently entered. Imagine their surprise when that same officer served them their tea!

On the third floor is a large open attic which some say was used to dry the hops (or Madame’s washing!). The powers that be forbade the use of this space as ‘one corner…. had been knocked out by a shell’ but Tubby was having none of it. He pleaded with the engineers to do something and they repaired the outer wall and the roof. This became ‘the heart of the house’ and accommodates the chapel, generally know as ‘The Upper Room’. Tubby wrote ‘The Bishop of Winchester sent us out some splendid old hangings, dark red and green, which had once been used in the private chapel at Southwark… beneath which was set the carpenter’s bench that was found in the garden.’ The top of that bench can still be seen as the altar top. Many ‘Tommy’s’ were baptised, confirmed and received their last communion in this place, which still has an atmosphere of calm and love.

It is reported that one Holy Week Tubby ‘managed to borrow an amazingly good musician… then lieutenant in the Suffolk Regiment – but once organist of the Royal Philharmonic Society. His presence at our little groan-box… was a miracle of adaptation.’ That small harmonium ‘groan-box’ can still be heard if such a talented musician is available.

The Upper Room was not the only music area in the house. There is a piano on the ground floor and a wooden staircase led from the garden to a hole in the wall which gave entrance to a hop store. This place had been acquired as a church hall as it could hold far more than the Upper Room but during the week it became a concert hall. The archives show that a number of ‘famous names’ played these boards when they had time in Pops.

The house could accommodate twelve people. Most rooms were communal with stretcher beds and blankets. These provided more facilities than a leave-goer required, or a returning officer expected. However, the smallest room of the House (6 feet by 4) held just one bed. But this bed was beyond compare: throughout the war we had one pair of sheets that belonged to it by right (though one sheet must be in the wash). This room was grandly christened the ‘General’s Bedroom’.

In 1918 the house reverted to a family home but so many people rang the bell or climbed the walls in an effort to show friends or family their ‘home’ in Belgium that the Coevoet-Camerlynck family soon realised that they had lost their privacy. In 1930 Lord Wakefield of Hythe managed to buy the property and gave it a generous endowment. The house remains in the hands of the Talbot House Association – an Anglo-Belgian organisation. In 1929 General Sir Herbert Plumer wrote ‘In all my experience I have never known a place so vital to morale as Talbot House.’

Talbot House is still open to visitors. If you wish to stay that is possible, but as a listed building there are no en-suite bathrooms. If you just want to drop in then the House is open six days a week. In the founding tradition, there will always be a welcome and a cup of tea.

Opening Hours
Open daily (except Monday) from 10.00am to 5.30pm. Last admission 4.30pm. Admission €8 (Christmas closure: 19 December to 3 January.)

Quotations taken from:
Rev PB Clayton Tales of Talbot House Chatto & Windus, London 1919
Rev PB Clayton Plain Tales of Flanders, Longman, Green & Co. London 1929
Futility

Move him into the sun –
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds, –
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
Full-nerved – still warm – too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
– O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth’s sleep at all?

Wilfred Owen was brought up as an evangelical Anglican and discovered his poetic vocation in 1903 or 1904 whilst on holiday in Cheshire. In October 1915, he enlisted in the Artists’ Rifles Officers’ Training Corps and joined the Manchester Regiment in June 1916. He had a number of traumatic experiences – falling into a shell hole and suffering concussion were amongst them. Eventually he was diagnosed as suffering from shell shock and spent time in hospital in Edinburgh. He was eventually discharged but was considered only fit for light duties. However at the very end of August 1918 he returned to the front line and on 1 October 1918 he led units of the Second Manchesters to storm a number of enemy strong points near the village of Joncourt. Sadly on November 4, only one week before the end of the war, he was shot and killed. The news of his death arrived at his parents’ house in Shrewsbury on Armistice Day.
The new Real Easter Egg range

Out of the 80 million chocolate Easter Eggs sold each year, The Real Easter Egg is the only one with a copy of the Easter story in each box.

The Real Easter Egg campaign aims to establish giving a Real Easter Egg as a tradition. The supermarkets still don't stock enough, so last year more than 120,000 were sent through the post directly to churches and individuals.

To date more than 450,000 eggs have been bought by churches and more than £120,000 has been donated to charity.

The Real Easter Egg has three versions:

- **The Original** Real Easter Egg has had a complete re-design and now includes a 24 page Easter story book and a pack of milk chocolate Chunky Buttons in the box.
- **The Special Edition** Real Easter Egg is made of Belgian milk chocolate. It comes with an olive wood holding cross from the Holyland and a orange milk chocolate bar.
- **The Sharing Box** is designed for services, assemblies and events. It comes with 20 ‘Christ is Risen’ foilled 6cm midl-milk chocolate eggs and 20 Easter story booklets.

Join the campaign

Last year many congregations had a champion who promoted the Real Easter Egg, put sign-up lists in church, took money and placed a direct order with The Meaningful Chocolate Company.

To download resources, register for special offers or to find out more visit: www.realeasteregg.co.uk

You can buy from from the official shop Traidcraft and independent shops.

Join The Real Easter Egg 2014 campaign

Out of the 80 million chocolate Easter Eggs sold each year, The Real Easter Egg is the only one with the Easter story in the box.

Choose from three versions

- **Original Real Easter Egg - new design** (150g RRP £3.99)
  3 crosses on the box, comes with Mark’s Resurrection text in lid, 24 page Easter storybook, milk chocolate egg, pack of our Chunky Buttons 25g and donation to Traidcraft Exchange.

- **Special Edition Real Easter Egg** (280g RRP £9.99)
  Celtic crosses with gold finish on the box, comes with a Holy Land Olive wood holding cross, extra thick milk chocolate egg and Meaningful milk Chocolate orange bar.

- **Sharing Box** (400g - 20 eggs at 20g each RRP £19.99)
  Designed for services, assemblies and events, comes with 20 ‘Christ is Risen’ foilled 6cm mid-milk chocolate eggs and 20 copies of the Easter story - 8 page booklet.

Order now at www.realeasteregg.co.uk

How to buy

Pay online by card - The simplest way to pay is to visit our online shop at www.realeasteregg.co.uk

Payment by cheque - Complete the form below and return it to The Meaningful Chocolate Company, 384 Knutsford Road, Warrington, WA4 1JE. Cheques payable to ‘The Meaningful Chocolate Company Ltd’.

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Grand Total
Quotable quotes for The Reader

Facebook isn’t the problem. It’s the symptom.

Author Maria Konnikova reflects on a study claiming that Facebook makes users ‘sad and lonely’ (The New Yorker, 10th September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the quote to talk about the real location of the human problem – inside our hearts, not just in outside temptations. Facebook, like many other things, is a tool which can be used for good or bad: to exacerbate loneliness and envy, or to share and connect. If we feel ‘sad and lonely’ using Facebook, could Facebook be the symptom rather than the problem? How can we use the internet in a constructive, godly way? What deeper solutions does God offer to the problem of the human heart?

Heaven we hope is just up the road/ Show me the way, Lord, ’cause I’m about to explode.

Soft-rock band Coldplay in the single ‘Atlas’ (Parlophone, September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the lyric to talk about the pain and frustration that can come whilst waiting for God and his guidance. We may have the hope that ‘heaven is just up the road’, but nevertheless feel that we’re ‘about to explode’ in the midst of a difficult situation. Where is God when we’re hurting, or confused about which way to go? By what means, and in what timing, should we expect God to ‘show us the way’?

I’m moved by folk that I might struggle to love at first.

Actor Jake Gyllenhaal on why he’s drawn to play outcasts and oddballs (The Guardian, 21st September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the quote to talk about our calling, as Christians, to love people who might be considered ‘unlovable’. When he was on earth, Jesus went out of his way to associate with people who were outcasts from society, demonstrating God’s powerful love for those who might otherwise be overlooked or rejected. How do we respond to God’s love for us when we’re at our most unlovable? How can we develop empathy and compassion for others?

Sixty-two per cent of Britons have falsely claimed to have read highbrow books, in order to look more intelligent.

Statistic from a poll (The Week magazine, 14th September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the statistic to talk about the effort we put into keeping up appearances. Whether it’s pretending to have read highbrow books, preparing impressive conversational topics, showing up at all the right parties or even the right church events, we’re often desperate to present ourselves to the world in a certain way. In an age of social media, the temptation to put on a performance and play up our positive qualities is ever-present. What happens when we let our guard down and show other people our faults and failings? How can God’s love and acceptance help to heal our insecurities?

I stood for nothing, so I fell for everything.

Singer-songwriter Katy Perry in her hit single ‘Roar’ (Virgin EMI, 1st September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the quote to talk about the importance of making a stand for the things we believe in. In what areas should our Christian faith lead us to ‘make a stand’, and go against the flow of culture? How do we know when it’s right to make a stand in this way, and when it’s more appropriate to compromise or reconsider our position? In what sense might we risk ‘falling for everything’ if we don’t have clear convictions about the things which matter most?

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Statistic from a poll (The Week magazine, 14th September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the statistic to talk about the effort we put into keeping up appearances. Whether it’s pretending to have read highbrow books, preparing impressive conversational topics, showing up at all the right parties or even the right church events, we’re often desperate to present ourselves to the world in a certain way. In an age of social media, the temptation to put on a performance and play up our positive qualities is ever-present. What happens when we let our guard down and show other people our faults and failings? How can God’s love and acceptance help to heal our insecurities?

I stood for nothing, so I fell for everything.

Singer-songwriter Katy Perry in her hit single ‘Roar’ (Virgin EMI, 1st September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the quote to talk about the importance of making a stand for the things we believe in. In what areas should our Christian faith lead us to ‘make a stand’, and go against the flow of culture? How do we know when it’s right to make a stand in this way, and when it’s more appropriate to compromise or reconsider our position? In what sense might we risk ‘falling for everything’ if we don’t have clear convictions about the things which matter most?

Heaven we hope is just up the road/ Show me the way, Lord, ’cause I’m about to explode.

Soft-rock band Coldplay in the single ‘Atlas’ (Parlophone, September 2013)

Suggestion
You could use the lyric to talk about the pain and frustration that can come whilst waiting for God and his guidance. We may have the hope that ‘heaven is just up the road’, but nevertheless feel that we’re ‘about to explode’ in the midst of a difficult situation. Where is God when we’re hurting, or confused about which way to go? By what means, and in what timing, should we expect God to ‘show us the way’?

I’m moved by folk that I might struggle to love at first.

Actor Jake Gyllenhaal on why he’s drawn to play outcasts and oddballs (The Guardian, 21st September 2013)

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What are you doing here?

Reflections on the value of spending a weekend together

Haylor Lass
is a Reader in Exeter Diocese

Brilliant sunshine promised a fine weekend as we drove across the top of Exmoor on our way to Lee Abbey, tucked in a hollow on the edge of the cliffs by the Valley of the Rocks at Lynton. We were heading for Otter Vale Mission Community Weekend, a rather cumbersome title for a great time of people just being together and enjoying food, activities, prayer, learning and encouragement together.

Welcomed by Community members, shown our rooms and offered a cup of tea and scrummy chocolate cake, we had time to explore our surroundings (or let off steam across the fields in the case of the under-20s), before it was time for dinner. This was the first of many satisfying meals – nearly 100 adults and 20 children create quite a hubbub!

Coffee in the Gallery was followed by an evening session of welcome from the warden, David Rowe, who told us the tale of Cinderella, with a twist that nobody lived happy ever after, because ‘Cinders’ was too afraid to say yes to the prince’s offer. An engaging speaker, David has a gift for putting across a serious and important message in a light-hearted and simple way. The evening was rounded off by hot chocolate and a short time of quiet in the chapel for those who wanted it. Saturday morning dawned bright and sunny, though I heard that the one or two who had chosen to camp had frosty toes! There was morning tea for the early risers and a moving prayer walk to the cliff tops led by host team members. Breakfast was followed by two morning ‘teaching’ sessions for the adults, while the young people went off for a variety of activities. David led us though some key messages from Ephesians about the presence of Christ in our community and the quality of our relationships, again spiced with humour and a seemingly endless source of one-liners. After coffee, he reminded us of the Lord’s question to Elijah, ‘What are you doing here?’ prompting discussion of that question for all of us and the bigger questions of sharing that message with the wider community. We were reminded that the potential is already there – within us.

Saturday afternoon was filled with a great range of activities – walking, painting pebbles, riding the zip wire, paper corsage making, listening for bird song, and cocoa and toasted marshmallows over a campfire on the beach. Candle-lit dinner was followed by an entertainment of riddles, music and dramatic sketches by both community members and some of the guests. There was the usual hot chocolate and quiet prayer in the chapel to round off the day, although those with stamina (or insomnia) were invited to watch the late-night film about William Wilberforce. Sunday morning’s main event was a Holy Communion service with the community in an overflowing meeting room, where David gave an inspiring message about following Jesus with our hearts, and joining in his party. This was followed by coffee, chat or prayer, before a roast lunch to round off our time together. What had we gained? All those I asked, from 8 minus to 80 plus, had had a superb weekend, within the very special atmosphere provided by Lee Abbey. Many were encouraged and uplifted by the easy communication with others – over meals, walking the estate or in the coffee lounge. And they certainly appreciated the time to listen to God and see him at work in our lives. Have we developed bonds for our Mission Community? It was noticeable that some parish groups stuck close together and didn’t mix well with others. And, of course, only a small percentage of our community were present. Verdict? It was an overwhelmingly positive first step, whilst recognising that there is far to go!

Haylor Lass is a Reader and a churchwarden of St Luke’s, Newton Poppleford in the Otter Vale Mission community in Exeter Diocese.
If only Saint Paul’s letters had punctuation! What a difference a comma can make.

Fuelled by the growing popularity of ‘every-member ministry’, in the major updating of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible during 1971/2 a comma was omitted from Ephesians 4:12 ‘for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry’. This omission found its way into most other modern translations, including the NRSV, REB, GNB, NIV, etc, as ‘to equip the saints for the work of ministry’ and it has led to the view that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given to the church to make ministers of all disciples.

A failure to distinguish the two ways in which we understand ‘diakonia’, as ‘service’ and as ‘ministry’ easily leads to an unhelpful confusion between discipleship and ministry, particularly lay ministry.

‘Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry’ the Lima Report of the WCC in 1982, places a valuable emphasis on the part played by every Christian in the mission of God. However there is also some blurring, for instance: ‘The word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called’. This thinking further encouraged many to affirm that baptism is a universal sign of gifts for ministry. Thus, ‘every-member ministry’ or ‘the ministry of the baptised’ has become a given, the terms ‘discipleship’ and ‘lay ministry’ were (and still are) frequently used to describe the same thing, and Christians urged to seek out their own ‘lay ministry’.

In the simplest and most basic sense, ‘ministry’ simply describes our being servants of God – a calling of all Christians. But there is more to be said about this word and, in order to make sense of the New Testament and of God’s work in today’s world, we need to make clearer the distinctions between the service of all Christian disciples and commissioned ministry.

‘Ministry’ has become a word that finds its way into every thought for the renewal of the church’s life. It has been said that ‘Ministry is a greedy concept.’ In addition, it has acquired, in most church-people’s hearing, the sense that it is to do with service within the church or on behalf of the church. Deep down it is church ministry. Thus the nagging question which hangs over every Christian: ‘What’s your ministry? What are you doing for the church?’ We have all come across those who moan and boast simultaneously about the number of jobs they do for the church! The focus of attention subconsciously turns from worship, prayer, the Bible, the sacraments and witness, basics of Christian discipleship, to a preoccupation with ‘ministries’. It’s not that all of these are unnecessary or under-valued because sustaining the life of the church is vital, but the primary focus easily shifts.

While churches have ‘ministries’ for welcoming, hospitality, prayer, worship, music, children, youth, healing, and everything else – just take a look at the notice-boards! – fewer people out there in society want to belong. Why? Because what’s inside is not what it says on the tin. On the label the church advertises what God and his people offer to the world; on the inside, it’s about keeping the church going! No wonder so many younger people find this unattractive. For me, it points towards the same basic problem in the declining church: internalisation, ministry displacing discipleship.

It is easy to see how this happens. When every disciple is urged to have a ‘ministry’ (and the congregation has so many jobs to fill), the church itself becomes the aim. Thinking becomes subtly internalised, and even evangelism evolves into an activity the church engages in simply to bring more people in; to make ‘my’ church grow, rather than the outward sharing of the priceless good news in Christ for the benefit of all. ‘God so loved the church that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not die but have eternal life.’ John 3:16

Ministry is always the servant of mission. Ministry for its own sake is entertainment, keeping the troops happy until the day when we’re all pushing-up daisies and the key in the church door is turned for the last time. Good, called, well-trained, accredited, commissioned and accountable ministers are vital to equip the church for the mission of God, supporting the primary relationship of God to humanity, his giving nature:

‘God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.’ John 3:16

Some of the language we use in strategic planning reveals a confusion not only between discipleship and ministry but also between mission and ministry, and the language of ministry is used when clearly the primary purpose is mission.

In theological terms, our understanding of the New Testament word ‘diakonia’
commissioned ministry in the Church. Without confusing the roles of deacon and lay minister, the concept of *diakonia* must apply to all the public, commissioned, accountable ministry of the church, laid and ordained.

On the other hand, all are disciples of Christ by baptism and by accepting his call to ‘Follow me’. Discipleship makes no distinctions between followers of Jesus Christ, in terms of age, gender, ordination or ministry: there is no hierarchy among disciples. This discipleship principle lies behind such practices as the giving of the consecrated bread and wine into the hands of each communicant at the most sacred moment of communion.

**Fewer people out there in society want to belong. Why? Because what’s inside is not what it says on the tin**

Being a disciple is about being a Christian, a servant of God, all the time and in every place. I believe there is a basic misunderstanding of one of the key illustrations of the church in the New Testament: the body of Christ. Back in the 1970s and 80s (Series 3, ASB) it became the liturgical fashion to link the eucharistic Peace with a reference to the body of Christ, as in: ‘We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...’ (This remains an option in Common Worship.) This was followed by encouraging congregations to share the peace — all good stuff. I wonder whether the quotation did some damage to the Anglican psyche because subliminally it turned us in on ourselves and gave us an unhealthy sense of the body of Christ principally as a gathered body ministering within itself. Such unexpressed, sub-conscious thinking can be highly deceptive. That is not to denigrate either the importance of the body of Christ gathered in worship or the need to supply the needs of her members.

I am sure that Saint Paul intended a broader reference than the local eucharistic gathering, the great diversity of life and witness of the Christian community during all 168 hours of the week. So, on Monday morning, John is in the factory, Jane is in the hospital, Joe is in school, Arun is visiting a client, Maria is opening her shop, Clare is looking for a job, and so on: that’s what the body of Christ looks like for almost all the week. The church is, for most of the time, turned outwards, explosively diverse in her mission, witness and discipleship; in the words of Bishop John V Taylor, we are ‘making Christ visible’.

Christian witness in Britain today will not rely on campaigns but on the vital witness of Christian disciples, whose presence, attitudes and actions raise such questions that others look for the meaning in their lives. Thus the equipping of disciples for Christian witness in all the places to which God calls us as human beings is more important to God’s mission than strategies for ministry.

‘Biblically the real challenge for the church is to make disciples (i.e., those who are actively and consciously following the way of Jesus), not to make converts (those who take a tentative first step toward Jesus).’

The role of the Church as the place where disciples are fed, nurtured and equipped should not be minimised if we are willing to be surprised by God at work among us.

A failure to differentiate between the ‘service’ of all Christians and the ‘ministry’ of some is disabling discipleship, our calling to follow Jesus. James Catford from Bible Society has pointed out that ‘Dallas Willard calls the issue of poor or non-existent discipleship the elephant in the Western Church. It’s there in the middle of all we do. We walk around it, make allowances for it and try to live with it. But we rarely name it as the biggest obstacle in our missional task, and are even less likely to intentionally try [sic] to shift it. The plain fact is that the Church in England and Wales is lacking in discipleship. We have much to learn from Christians in other parts of the world.’

If we are to reverse the general decline of the self-preserving parts of the institutional Church we need clarity of vision and some risk-taking. In practice that will be established on building strong foundations for Christian discipleship and maintaining high expectations of those called to public ministry.

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1 Helen Oppenheimer.
3 Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4
5 Ephesians 3:20, 21
6 James Catford, Chief Executive of the Bible Society, in interview with Stephen R Holmes, in *The Bible in Transmission* Summer 2002
From one point of view, I am not too unlikely a candidate. I was brought up in a nurturing Christian environment, I have always been an active member of a church, I have a good level of education, and I am fairly articulate. I have been a Sunday school teacher and a home group leader, led Bible studies, and even preached!

On the other hand, I am a geek, not a social worker. I have a degree in Computer Science, twenty-eight years of IT experience, and still earn my living using computers. I am good at abstract structures, programming, flow charts, databases, and information in electronic form. My first response to a problem is to switch it off and reboot it. What I am not good at is people. I find it harder to remember the name of the person I have just been introduced to than to remember a password I was told last week. I can listen to someone’s life story, but I’ll forget it by teatime. People are vague and incomprehensible clusters of random acts; I can get on with most of them, but I have little understanding of how they tick. So how did I end up as a Reader?

The story I give here is not a complete description of how God made me a Reader. Also, God’s purposes in these events are not limited to me becoming a Reader. These events are only the more obvious steps that God has taken in my life, and while I see events are only the more obvious steps that God has taken in my life, and while I see

job, I actually had to talk to people who were not interested in computers except as tools that might help them do their job better. My job was to understand their business requirements, to plan and develop a solution (usually involving a computer) that could help them, and then to show them how to use and make the most of that solution.

Gradually, I came to appreciate that I am in a privileged position. People trust me with the details of their business. They rely on me to understand it well enough to translate it into computer-think. They consult me about possible changes, and even listen to me when I suggest changes to them.

I find it harder to remember the name of the person I have just been introduced to than to remember a password I was told last week

I also have to find ways of explaining the abstract objects and functions of software to people, and relating them to whatever job the person needs to do. It is a ministry of mediation.

Once even the most technophobic clerk learns that I really am on their side, there is another step: I discovered that there are three little words that mean a great deal in a working relationship: ‘While you’re here...’ Those words often mean that someone is about to share something that they wouldn’t bother to log a support call for, or even pick up the phone to tell you, but ‘while you’re here’ can you advise them, check on some little annoyance, solve some mystery or do some other IT magic to make their lives better?

So working in local government taught me that I could get on with people who were not geeks, and build professional relationships that were not entirely about computers.

GIDEONS
I was invited to join the Gideons by my home group leader. Gideons spread the word by, well, spreading the word. We place Bibles and New Testaments in hotels, hospitals, waiting rooms and other places, and we present them personally to school pupils, members of the police and similar organisations. When I joined the local Gideon branch, I found that the biggest job was schools. Every year, I visit several schools for a Year 7 assembly, stand up and talk to anywhere up to three hundred pupils for ten minutes or so, and then offer each of them a New Testament.

It might be designed to keep us humble. What can you say, in ten minutes, to a young audience which is largely ignorant of everything biblical except, perhaps, the Christmas story? Perhaps it doesn’t matter, as long as we don’t put them off. Some of them do read their little red books. Ten, twenty or thirty years on, we hear stories of how those testaments were instrumental in somebody’s journey towards faith.

It was also ideally designed for training me to stand in front of an audience not guaranteed to be sympathetic, and deliver a ten minute talk that kept their attention until the bell went. Not directly relevant to the average parish communion, maybe, but not a skill to be sneezed at, either.

Gideons helped me to talk about my faith. I usually assume that these strange beings called people won’t be interested in what I feel and believe about Jesus Christ, but Gideons provided a structure, and a reason

LOCAL AUTHORITY
Perhaps the first step came when I stopped working for a computer manufacturer and moved to local government. In my new
to be somewhere, that was sufficient to permit my introvert nature to share things that I found so important.

**PREACHING**

There was another, unexpected, aspect to the Gideons. We visit churches to tell them about our activities on their behalf. I often found it difficult to teach a lesson on God to people who do not already believe in Him, but I could teach a sermon. I also continued to develop my gifts of presentation and explanation, mixed with a leavening of humour. One church in particular, being without a minister for a period, asked me back every so often without the excuse of having the Gideons too. This gave me encouragement that I must be doing something right.

I not only preached, but I enjoyed preaching. I not only enjoyed preaching, I also enjoyed preparing a sermon, sharpening up my ideas and focusing my presentation. Similarly, I found that I wanted my listeners to enjoy the experience.

**CAROLINE**

At the time I met Caroline. She was a mental health nurse, a job a million miles from anything I could conceive of doing. However, perhaps God felt that those were the skills needed to deal with me, as we got on well and married. Caroline has been a very encouraging voice in my life, as well as teaching me more about those incomprehensible things called people, and even a little about myself. Caroline noticed – and told me – that my people skills were not as bad as I thought. I might not be a world-class psychoanalyst, but I could work with practically anybody. I could talk to anyone, given a pretext, and understand their point of view. I could even teach some reluctant computer users to press the right buttons and to be confident of getting the right answer.

God also gave us a daughter. To have a child is to learn a whole new appreciation of God’s fatherhood.

**READER TRAINING**

Being curious and feeling responsibility even as an occasional preacher, I looked for some form of training that would help me to serve congregations better. A friend suggested the course run by York diocese, primarily for Readers in training, but open to anyone. I joined, and spent two happy years studying part-time. But when the two years finished, so did I.

What may have seemed like a step towards Reader ministry was nothing of the sort – in my opinion. To those who suggested that I might go further on that road, I would reply that my gifts as a preacher were outweighed by my lack of gifts as a pastor. I felt very strongly that anyone who preached regularly to the same congregation had a pastoral responsibility to fulfil. I did not see that pastoral ability in myself. Anyway, I was not even a proper Anglican; despite spending twenty years attending an Anglican church, I had never felt it appropriate to be confirmed. Having been brought up in a thoroughly non-conformist church, I cherished my non-conformity. I had been a Pentecostal, and then a Baptist, but I did not feel it necessary to be an Anglican, other than by participation in a local church.

**PRISCILLA AND AQUILA**

We visited the Keswick convention, and Caroline and I, seeking some understanding of where we should move forward as a couple, attended a talk on Priscilla and Aquila. Afterwards we repaired to a tea-shop in the town, and I had to confess to Caroline that I had a feeling that God was nudging me towards a more regular use of my gifts. We discussed the possibilities, and one that presented itself was indeed becoming a Reader. We talked and prayed further, but the possibility refused to go away.

From there, the story moved forward on conventional lines. I saw my vicar, who agreed to support me. The PCC also supported me. I was confirmed. I went to the selection committee, and was recommended to the bishop, who approved me for training. And then I dropped into the third year of the training course – having done two years already – and two years later I was admitted and licensed as a Reader.

How did I change so quickly? Actually, I suspect most of the change happened over decades, and I just didn’t see myself changing. I still see myself as lacking in pastoral skills, so I have to work harder to recognise and use the skills that my wife assures me are there. I am still a non-conformist by inclination, so I must discipline myself as a Reader to conform – as I have promised – to the Church of England, while trying as a Christian to be conformed above all else to the mind of Christ. I am still a geek by profession, so I play to my strengths in understanding and verbalising my faith, not just in preaching but also in using the liturgy.

The most important change – the only important change, really – was the realisation that God was pointing in this direction. Despite all previous hints and encouragement from friends that I should think about becoming a Reader, I do not think that I had been ignoring God’s guidance. Only when he had all his preparations in place did he show me the way to go. I have to trust that he knows what he is doing, for my sake and for the sake of the parish where I work.
In the Summer 13 issue of *The Reader*, Tony Phelps-Jones wrote a helpful article about the issues facing the 1.5 million people in the UK who have learning disabilities and their access to church. In this article, I am addressing the issue of the 10% (6 million) of the population who have a specific learning difficulty (SpLD), particularly with reference to dyslexia and making church more accessible. As a Reader and a Specialist Dyslexia Tutor and Assessor, primarily working with adults, I aim to highlight the necessity of bringing an awareness of dyslexia into what we do, and how we do it, in church.

There are many common misconceptions about what dyslexia is. It used to be assumed that it was a middle class parenting excuse for their children not achieving academically. Now that we have brain-imaging techniques, we can see the difference in processing between the brains of people with and without dyslexia. There is no longer room for dismissing dyslexia. Dyslexia not only has an impact on reading and writing, but it can also impact on planning, organisation, speech and many other everyday tasks. People with dyslexia are found in every social level and group, some people have more extreme dyslexia and some milder but it continues to affect people throughout their lives. The truth is that until someone tells you that they have dyslexia, you probably would not know and often they will never tell you.

The contemporary church is undoubtedly attempting to reach out to the ‘un-churched’ through initiatives like ‘Fresh Expressions’ and that can only be a good thing for the kingdom of God. The emphasis is on context, seeking to meet people where they are 2. This being said, there are still issues to consider about what church looks like, how it is formed and how we reach out.

...everybody else seems to know what is happening but to you only the odd word is accessible.

Recently I was reading something, which prompted me to consider the issue of church accessibility once again. Most of us are aware of the traditional barriers of walking through a barred door into a strange, unknown world whether that is walking into a nightclub, a betting shop or a church. However, the challenge for the church is to reach out to people who not only have no experience of church, but also might have dyslexia or might be unable to read at a functional level (6 million UK adults are functionally illiterate, meaning they cannot read a medicine bottle, food labels or fill out a job application form 3). (Please note that although there may be some overlap from each cohort, they are by no means one and the same group of people.)

The problem of accessibility comes not only because people do not have experience of church and therefore find it threatening, but also because they have none of the language of the church. The church has traditionally relied on words and until recently the church had words that were often largely the same, week in week out, whether that was a relatively fixed liturgy or a fairly stable repertoire of hymns. Now we change words more frequently and use modern songs as they come in and out of fashion with the latest trend in theology or fashionable songwriters. This change has caused problems for those groups of people that I mention above; what once might have been welcoming and ‘safe’ is now quite the opposite.

For someone with dyslexia, who might be slow to process words, when they come into church there are a lot of barriers to break through, especially if we pile them with service cards, notice sheets and possibly books, or a screen with rapidly changing text. Regardless of the means of communicating, there are always a lot of words that need to be accessed whether through auditory or written means.

Imagine that you go to a country where you only know a little of the language - you learnt it from an app before you went, or did it for GCSE quite a long time ago – and you
are placed in a situation where everybody else seems to know what is happening but to you only the odd word is accessible. How would that make you feel? Maybe you would feel unwelcome, embarrassed and afraid of what was being asked of you. That is what often happens to people with dyslexia when they come into church. I asked some of my Christian students with dyslexia what it was like the first time that they went to church. One said that as a fifteen year old he, ‘couldn’t understand a word’, another that, ‘it was gobbledygook’.

One person that I asked said ‘Worship is too bound up with words and books’. If you have ever been to work for a new organisation or got involved in a new group of people, you will understand this. I well remember the first time that I went to a meeting when I started work for a new organisation: I had to write a list of acronyms that were used during the meeting and then when I came out I had to ask a colleague what they meant – it was a long list! The language that we use in church is inaccessible to people at that level all of the time: what on earth do we mean by ‘Advent’, ‘confession’, ‘communion’, ‘blessing’, ‘offertory hymn’? When reaching out to those for whom church is not the ‘blessing’, ‘offertory hymn’? When reaching out to those for whom church is not the norm, there are already issues, as Laurence Singlehurst puts it: ‘In a world that no longer understands words such as “sin” and “repentance”, how can we make the gospel relevant?’ Add to that problem a slow processing speed, short-term memory difficulties and reading difficulties associated with dyslexia, and trying to take in all of the information is hard work and exhausting. One person with dyslexia expressed their preferences like this: ‘I don’t worship easily with lots of words… I manage this by concentrating on the view, which helps me.’

Most of the students I work with have to work hard to read text from new contexts and struggle with unknown words, because until they have heard them out loud, they have no means of accessing their sound and therefore their meaning.

So how can we seek to include people who have dyslexia? Sadly there is no one size fits all solution, but there are strategies that we can consider. Bishop Graham Cray argues that in an age when there are low literacy levels we need to have ‘simple memorised liturgy which requires neither books nor screens”. This would be a good start for the one in six in our society with literacy difficulties; it would also help some people who have dyslexia. Acknowledging that there probably are people who are attending who have dyslexia is also a start: putting on any leaflet or on a sign on the wall, or both, a large, clear message saying, ‘If you have any requirements for different colour paper or size print, please let us know.’ Of course, until someone really feels safe they are unlikely to tell anybody and therefore strategies that are less obvious would be better. What about printing on cream paper, as well as white? Lots of people suffer from visual stress (unpleasant visual symptoms when reading) and this would help them. Maybe try printing some larger print sheets for a few weeks and see if, when they are freely offered, anybody accepts them. How about offering sheets on aqua blue paper and cream and seeing whether it makes a difference to what people choose. Different colours work well for different people: white is usually the worst colour for people with visual stress, even though black text on white is often best for people with a visual impairment.

For people with dyslexia who have short-term working memory difficulties, even if they have come across a word before, they may well not remember what it sounds like. Therefore, what about offering the words for the service online in advance? If, for example, you were using a new seasonal order or a new song, it would be particularly important to publish those words in advance, but all words of the service would be of benefit. This would make a huge difference for someone who would struggle to read and understand new words, even more so if the words are from a new context. What about an online glossary of words and terms that you use? This could look something like this: the word or term in one column, what it means in the next and what that ‘looks like in reality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word/ Term</th>
<th>What it means</th>
<th>What it means in reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>Christian rite of initiation with water</td>
<td>When someone wants to belong to God’s family they have water poured over them as a sign of washing off the old and now belonging to God’s family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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When using PowerPoint use a minimum font size 36 in a non-serif font (e.g. Arial, Calibri). Use an off-white or pastel background colour, never white. Alternatively you could use white text on a dark background. Whatever you do, don’t obscure text with images. If you are using a book or leaflet make sure that you introduce each part by announcing the page and key heading for that part of the service. Hymn books are really hard to read because the font is often inaccessible, so it is better to print words onto sheets in a clear, large font. If you have a website, make sure that you have a web accessibility tool available for users, so that they can easily change the colour, font size and background colour of your site (put ‘accessibility for dyslexia’ into a web browser for more details).

When leading a service think about using colour, movement and picture. As one student put it: ‘The few times that colour is used in liturgies I have enjoyed it more.’ These are just a few suggestions, as a starting point for good practice.

If we are really serious about reaching out to all people, we need to engage with the issues associated with dyslexia. It should become part of what we offer as the norm, rather than an added extra that we offer for the few. Evidence suggests that where schools have adopted ‘dyslexia friendly’ strategies, it benefits all children, not just those with dyslexia; I can only think that in the same way, having a ‘dyslexia friendly’ church would benefit all, not just those with dyslexia. 

Alison Earey is a Dyslexia Specialist Support Tutor & Assessor


When Peter left to become Dean of Worcester Cathedral in 2007, newly-retired Canon Derek Tansill continued to co-ordinate and develop Chichester’s growing team of Reader volunteers – most of whom offered to do a duty once a month. Naturally, these are in addition to Readers’ parish and community duties and are highly valued by all concerned.

So, what do we Day Chaplains do? Over a period of six hours in summer and four hours in winter we stroll around the cathedral in our cassocks, wearing a Chaplain badge, so that we can be easily spotted by anyone who would like ‘a shoulder to cry on’, a moment of prayer, an explanation of the Christian faith, or a chat.

Our ministry is also offered to the vergers, the welcomers at the door, the guides, the enquiry desk staff, the shop assistants and restaurant staff: indeed, to anyone who needs us. The clergy take up any issues that are beyond our remit as lay ministers or that need following up.

The most vocal of our duties is when we mount the pulpit every hour to call the Cathedral to prayer. This takes the form of a welcome, followed by an invitation to stay still for a few moments while we remember ‘that we are, as always, in the presence of Almighty God.’ Then we say the prayer of St Richard – who was Bishop of Chichester in the 13th century, and whose shrine is at the East end of the Cathedral – and the Lord’s Prayer, hoping that at least some people will join us. Finally, we pray for a blessing, closing with: ‘I am the Day Chaplain here today. If I can be of any help to you, please speak to me as I walk around the Cathedral.’

Many people make a point of thanking us for the prayers and want to recommend this practice to their own cathedrals. I say that it reminds people that it is the house of God and not a museum. Also, in my case, many people are thrilled to hear a woman’s voice sound around the Cathedral.

The Precentor, Canon Tim Schofield, encourages us to read the Epistle and assist with the chalice when there is a service of Holy Communion; while Dean Nicholas Frayling is most supportive of all the hundreds of Cathedral volunteers, holding an annual social event to thank everyone.

Chichester Cathedral is a vibrant place at the hub of the city. Almost every Saturday – and often during the week – there is a rehearsal or performance, so the pulpit prayers (said if a gap in a rehearsal is found) are heard by dozens of people who might never otherwise enter a church.

Many opportunities arise for pastoral work. I find that just asking people, ‘Are you enjoying your visit?’ often results in a request for personal guidance or informal bereavement counselling; or something as serious as a person wanting to convert from another faith; or a question on biblical teaching.

One day, three young boys stopped me and asked if they could light a candle for their sick grandfather. ‘Is it all right to pray in here?’ one of them asked. So we lit a candle and knelt at the altar in front of the famous Piper Tapestry as I explained how to pray, and each boy said a few words. It was such a touching moment.

Another such moment arose when a tiny girl wanted to pray for her sick grandmother. I asked if Dolly wanted to join in – as she was part of the family – so we put Dolly’s hands together, too, and prayed.

Young children can be encouraged to search for four carvings of mice on various pieces of wooden furniture. This provides an opportunity to include them while chatting to their parents.

Much of my own ministry here is ‘off the cuff’: while eating my lunch in the Cloisters restaurant, or just walking around the whole cathedral site. The huge, remarkable stained-glass window in the south transept provides a common teaching-point as it depicts the connections between the Old and New Testaments.

At St Richard’s shrine there is a box where people can post prayers. At mid-day, these are read out in the Lady Chapel by the Day Chaplain (respecting anonymity, of course); and those already in the church for private prayer are invited to join in. This is really appreciated by those taking part.

In 2001, when Peter Atkinson was Canon Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral and Warden of Readers for the diocese, he had a vision for Readers to assist the clergy in their ministry to the staff and thousands of visitors to the Cathedral
The most consistently rewarding part of my varied Reader ministry is when, as a regular Day Chaplain at Chichester Cathedral, I meet people of all ages and different faiths, or no faith at all.

Many find it easier to offload their problems to complete strangers than to their local priests, and a friendly listening ear is what they seek. A brief sharing of prayers together is often what is needed; I can think of no occasion when I have felt my presence has not been of some small spiritual help to someone. The simple act of reading the hourly prayers invariably attracts favourable comments.

For example, when I complimented a young lady who had joined in with the Lord’s prayer, she told me that she was from Albania and proudly added ‘and I am a Muslim’. When asked how she had come to know the words she said she had a Christian school friend and sometimes went to her church. Her hosts on this visit were Roman Catholics from Portsmouth.

Many visitors come to light a candle for a loved one, to find peace and quiet and to meditate. Others come out of curiosity, and to ask questions about their faith, or lack of it.

A group of Chinese students arrived one day, and when asked if they were Christians, several responded ‘No, but we are looking…’. The leader, with good English, asked the welcomer at the door where he could find a Bible, insisting on the King James Bible. Taken to the cathedral shop, he came back triumphantly carrying a Jerusalem Bible and a hymn book. He confessed he did not belong to any faith group but was looking for a meaning in his life. He then wanted to know the difference between the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, resulting in a lengthy explanation and history of the Christian Church. He was clearly seriously interested in Christianity, and called himself Esau because he ‘liked the story he had read in the Bible’. The outcome of this encounter is not known, but a seed was sown. The Cathedral provides such opportunities for basic evangelism, which should not be missed.

Michael Casement
A Reader for 18 years, currently serving in the Benefice of Harting, Elsted and Treyford-cum-Didling.

I have been privileged to listen to visitors in Sussex’s Cathedral telling me about their sorrows and joys, their faith and their doubts; and in so doing, I hope I have helped them make connections between what they have experienced on their visits and their lives and problems. Here is just a small sample of the encounters I have experienced in my five years as Chaplain.

After hearing me recite the prayer of St. Richard, a Russian student of European history asked me, ‘Who is this St Richard? Why was he made a saint?’ She liked what I told her about his being considered good by the people with whom he mixed after he was expelled from his palace. She then said, ‘I find your old English Bible hard to read.’ This was my cue to give her a copy of the NIV paper-back version of St Mark’s Gospel (supplied by the Dean and Chapter to give to enquiring visitors).

I can endorse Maureen’s and Michael’s experiences regarding the positive reaction to the public reading of the hourly prayers. When on holiday, I visited another cathedral and a minister there told me how her aunt had decided to include St. Richard’s prayer in her funeral service, having heard it recited during her Chichester Cathedral visit.

A French teenager asked me to hear her story of deep sadness, verging on guilt. She regretted not having helped a friend who later committed suicide. This illustrated her need to find a listener outside her small village community. She was moved after we spoke to see how the Chichester sculptures – two 12th century stone icons of the raising of Lazarus – epitomise sorrow and new life.

Occasionally, visitors seek pastoral advice about practical matters. For instance, a local person who described in detail her financial problems, caused me to research sources of advice, in this case a branch of Christians Against Poverty (CAP). I produced a resource for Day Chaplains: a list of ‘Help Lines’, including a directional map to the homeless centre in a nearby village.

Once, I took a phone call from a distressed young woman in a tower-block flat in South London who wanted to be prayed with to give her courage to contact the police about her neighbour stalking her. After I had prayed with her, I asked her why she had not asked for help from someone nearer her home and how she knew this cathedral’s phone number. She replied, ‘I don’t know any Christians who I can speak to as I am speaking to you. I think I was given the phone number on the Cathedral’s information leaflet by someone who told me she had been given a good welcome when she went on a coach trip to Chichester.’

Another visitor wanted to show me some drawings he had made as the result of praying in the Cathedral for a new hobby to relieve the stress of his job. And one war-time evacuee said that Bishop and Mrs Bell had cared for her in their home. Both of these visitors shared their praise to God for what their contacts with the Cathedral meant to them.

Martin Cooke
A Reader for 20 years, currently serving in the Chichester United Benefice.

END PIECE

So, you never know how or where this Ministry can lead. A simple prayer, a listening ear, some words of encouragement – all embraced by the Gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – can bring others to know him and his love for every one of us.

Maureen Bravington, a Reader for 33 years, is currently serving in the United Benefice of Clymping & Yapton-with-Ford.

If any Reader in Chichester Diocese would like to serve as a Day Chaplain, please email the co-ordinator, Linda Barratt: lindashepley11@gmail.com
What Readers bring to Scripture

THE MARKET RESEARCHER
John Griffiths

At a simple level as a Reader I am able to bring work experience into the pulpit. One particularly vivid example was preparing to preach a sermon on the dishonest steward when I was planning a business development workshop for one of the largest landed estates in the UK and the previous week had been given a tour by the general manager. You can imagine how I took note of the details and wondered how it would be if he was to be given only a few hours to clear his desk and make a swift series of journeys in the Range Rover to make new arrangements with the tenant farmers and powerful neighbours! But I am sure all Readers can tell such stories.

What may be of more interest is that I regularly run one on one interviews or focus groups. My raw materials are question and answer exchanges, and open discussion. These are usually recorded and though I can work from notes usually I listen to a digital recording of the sessions again. When you remember what people have said you tend to précise it into your own words. When I transcribe what people are saying, the written account is like a musical score. I am interested in the actual words used and in hesitations, silences and changes in direction. In research we often say that people rarely say what they mean or mean what they say. So analysis involves listening and reading carefully. In the interview itself I am usually cross checking to see if I have understood correctly. I watch body language to see how involved people are – people reveal far more by how they sit and how they use their faces – and when I am looking for emotional response this can become very important. Researchers also use nonverbal exercises to encourage people to put into words, what they may never have consciously thought, or find hard or embarrassing to put into words. I never take for granted that people can give a straight answer to a question. They won't respond well to being grilled, so much of my questioning needs to put them at their ease.

Doing this kind of work has a big influence on the way I approach biblical texts. I am used to paying huge attention to how something is said, to repetition and to variations between different accounts. The language of the Bible is rich and comparisons between different versions of the same story are easy to do. I don't use commentaries as much as I expected from my Reader training as the lectionary passages are usually muscular enough to provide a context to understand what the author was intending. But rather than academic reading, I spend weeks sometimes living with the text, reading it in different translations before I write the sermon.

Recently I have been in training for a long distance run in the Welsh hills. And I have been listening to the New Testament being read aloud in 40 half hour episodes by a whole range of accents and voices. It's a free download on iTunes called Faith Comes by Hearing. Going out three times a week for at least an hour a time, I get through a lot each time. I realised last week that I am now hearing more scripture than I am reading. I notice broader patterns I never saw when I was studying short passages. The Bible is the product of an oral culture and as someone who uses the spoken word to understand consumer behaviour I value the chance to study it as an oral book.

THE TEACHER
Margaret Tinsley

As Head of Year, I take assemblies frequently. One of my favourite scripture passages for this is the parable of the talents – indeed, I cannot but see it from the school perspective! It shows the need for our young people to do their best academically, to use their gifts and talents to the full, and to use such gifts as kindness and sensitivity to others. All this informs my sermons.

Delightful as the girls are – and they really are praiseworthy young women, there can be the occasional hurt, something said or, nowadays, conveyed on a messaging system! How useful then, is St James, with his warnings about the ‘deadly venom’ of words – another Biblical passage which has so much meaning through its workplace use.

The power of language to indeed help or to harm. One wonderfully effective assembly story (which I have used in sermons) is about the old woman who was an inveterate gossip; no-one could make her desist. As a last resort, her priest gave her a bag of feathers to distribute over a small area. Once the bag was empty, he asked her to collect the feathers. But, with the majority lost, entangled in thorns or trodden into mud, it proved an impossible task. ‘Now you know the effect of your gossip; you can never take your words back.’ How better can ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness’ be illustrated?

In addition, as I'm a teacher of English, visits to the theatre are all-important and that can lead to new interpretations of scripture and further sermon examples, especially as some performances have a strong spiritual aspect. Take Hamlet's praise for the created world: 'this majestic roof fretted with golden fire' or Claudius on the sinner's lack of ability to pray: ‘Words without thoughts never to heaven go’.

Needless to state, my work leads to interpretations of scripture and literature; they influence my thoughts and provide ideas and examples for sermons.
Biblical thing to do; the answer is not always the one we want, but it is always there. The Psalms provide a wealth of material for such occasions.

Healing stories in the Bible are, of course, particularly pertinent. Jesus shows no fear around sick people – only compassion and understanding. Confidentiality means that I have to be careful about using actual examples, but I can and do make reference to situations encountered in the surgery. Recently it was a very moving example of a ‘good Samaritan’ I was able to use as a sermon illustration. In the area my surgery is in there are a large number of elderly patients and the kindness of neighbours, local shop keepers and taxi drivers is heart warming. The original story may have been told over 2,000 years ago, but modern day life still provides many occasions to be reminded how important it is to ‘go and do likewise’.

Being involved with so many people makes me constantly aware of how important it is to remember that we are all made in God’s image and are all loved and valued by Him for who we are. I try to view any passage of scripture from the perspective of all the characters involved in the story – from the main players who are named, for example the disciples, to those un-named crowds or slave girls who still give insight to a situation or story from which we can take guidance when seeking to apply the Bible stories to our everyday lives.

John Griffiths has worked in research and communications for 30 years

Margaret Tinsley is Head of Year at a Roman Catholic Girls’ Secondary School

Rosie Rawlinson is the practice manager in a GP practice

All the contributors are from St Albans Diocese
What does it mean to be ‘called’?

Why get ordained to continue pioneering?

As I write this, I am sitting on my bed surrounded by piles of scribbled notes from four or five theology books (in anticipation of constructing the essay that is due tomorrow). It is easy to look around this room and ask ‘What on earth am I doing here?’ Here being Ridley Hall Theological College in Cambridge.

It is just over six years since I was licensed as a Reader. Now I am here at Ridley Hall studying for ordination. Hopefully you have not stopped reading at that last sentence. I know that for many of my fellow Readers it can be seen as ‘going over to the other side’. And it is a fair question for you to ask and for me to ask of myself therefore ‘What on earth am I doing here?’ It is certainly a question I have been asked repeatedly during the lengthy selection process for ordination and it was a question I was asked during Reader selection. It is a question for which I confess I have no better or sophisticated answer than ‘calling’ and maybe that is the best and only answer.

Calling is a strange thing. It is often hard to articulate and my efforts to do so both in selection as a Reader and for ordination training were not always well received. A couple of particularly gruelling interviews left me commenting to my DDO that I felt rather like ‘marmite’. They love me or hate me. He did not disagree.

So called to what? When I was being interviewed with regards to Reader training a number of people asked why I was not going for ordination at the time. The premise seemed to be that as I was in leadership, the ordained role was the leadership role. I cannot myself subscribe to this view and in fact baulk at a distinction of hierarchy between the roles. The positions of Reader and clergy are different and complementary. Many are called to be ordained but not take up a specific leadership role. As a Reader I have had responsibility with a wider group of lay people for a congregation on the Marlpit estate in the west of Norwich for the last six years. Leadership therefore has not been the issue of the distinction for me between Reader and ordained ministry. The only answer I had to ‘why Reader ministry?’ when going through selection was that I did not feel called to be ordained. I felt called to Reader ministry.

If leadership is not the distinguishing factor then, what of training? Is the ordained person just more trained? This certainly can no longer be argued. There are many Readers with full theology degrees and ordained persons who have undertaken other pathways to ordination. I am here in Cambridge with another Reader who took her BA through the Diocesan Training System. The definition of Readers as ‘lay theologians’ is one I have found particularly helpful. So I am not here simply to gain more academic theological study.

The issue of sacraments is obviously one in debate among Readers. Many feel strongly about lay administration, many feel strongly that the administration of the sacraments should be reserved for clergy. Certainly having led a congregation I have sympathy with the argument that sacraments are best celebrated together within relationship. It is a source of frustration at times for those in direct leadership in our congregation who are not able to celebrate communion or baptise. I recall having to explain to one elderly lady in hospital who insisted I was ‘her Vicar’ and so could visit any time, that this was not the case. (The hospital chaplaincy later supported my having the same access as clergy to the hospital, given that I identified myself with my Reader badge). However, the desire to share sacraments alone I would suggest is not sufficient a reason to be ordained.

So I return to calling. What made me feel called to ordained ministry after a number of years leading a congregation as a Reader?

Simply calling. As I attempted to articulate in my first interviews for selection; like Wesley ‘my heart was strangely warmed.’ (It may be noted I was told ‘you will have to do better than that’ in response to this explanation). It was specifically in reading the description of Pioneer Ministers in the scenario examples of the Archbishops’ Council Guidelines which appeared to speak directly to my situation: ‘John is…in his mid-forties with an established track record in church planting and fresh expressions of church. He has been one of the leaders of a team establishing a fresh expression of church in a local council estate… With the support of the local church, John is seeking to test a call to ordained ministry as a natural development of his pioneering work.’ I could find no better description of myself.

We had been on the Marlpit estate for a number of years at that point. The church building on the estate was closed just weeks before my being licensed as a Reader. However despite having no building, I and some others still felt a strong commitment to the community and the need for there to be an indigenous expression of church. We began in the Community Centre the week after the building closed, soon finding a better home in the local school. The heart of this fresh expression of church has always been to reach out and serve the whole community. Despite having less than 20 people on a Sunday, we have two works with young children and carers, a community choir, a community garden, two church members are school governors and we lead assemblies in the school. Until its recent closure we were also leading services in the sheltered housing on the estate. Much of the work has grown out of a sense of listening. We began the second toddler
‘called’?

Katie Miller is a Reader preparing for ordination.

my front doorstep. It was not possible to simply shut the door and walk away. In some form or other it was necessary for me, having read these words and received a sense of calling, to tell someone. I was, in all honesty, quite happy to have the church say ‘no, we do not believe that you are called to Pioneer Ministry.’ I felt at that moment all that was required was obedience; to own that I believed I had been called and to submit that to the church for testing. I will not go into the details of the process that took me from reading a paragraph on a website to sitting surrounded by papers in a study bedroom. It was not a straightforward path, but until someone gave me an unequivocal ‘no’ I felt it was my responsibility to continue to be faithful to testing the calling I believed I had received.

Of course it is possible to be a Pioneer, a teacher, an evangelist or a pastor or any number of other things in the church without being either a Reader or ordained. We are all aware of many lay people exercising their gifts and ministries. A call to ministry does not necessitate a call to be licensed or ordained. Nor, I believe, should being a Reader or an ordained person be simply a vehicle for these other callings. To be a Reader or an ordained person is a calling in and of itself. Each of us will of course bring our own giftings and strengths to that call.

The call may be to work with a particular group of people, to exercise a particular ministry. It may involve becoming a licensed Reader or being ordained. It may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary. It is right and proper that we allow the church to test our sense of calling. At times we will need to hear that what we think we have heard is not what the church believes we should be doing at this time. It is a place of vulnerability to say ‘I think God may be asking me to do this’, but it is a good place to be as each of us says in our own way ‘Here I am Lord, send me.’

We are all aware of many lay people exercising their gifts and ministries. A call to ministry does not necessitate a call to be licensed or ordained. Nor, I believe, should being a Reader or an ordained person be simply a vehicle for these other callings. To be a Reader or an ordained person is a calling in and of itself. Each of us will of course bring our own giftings and strengths to that call.

Into the midst of this lay lead work came the calling to Pioneer Ministry. At first it felt to me a little like someone leaving a baby on the doorstep. It was not possible to simply shut the door and walk away. In some form or other it was necessary for me, having read these words and received a sense of calling, to tell someone. I was, in all honesty, quite happy to have the church say ‘no, we do not believe that you are called to Pioneer Ministry.’ I felt at that moment all that was required was obedience; to own that I believed I had been called and to submit that to the church for testing. I will not go into the details of the process that took me from reading a paragraph on a website to sitting surrounded by papers in a study bedroom. It was not a straightforward path, but until someone gave me an unequivocal ‘no’ I felt it was my responsibility to continue to be faithful to testing the calling I believed I had received.

We have been able to pass on much of the work on the Marlpit to local leaders and we continue to do so. I am often asked while here at Ridley Hall how the church is getting on without me. The straightforward answer is that, while it is true I am going back to Norwich at weekends to be with my family and lead some services, nothing has changed because I have moved to Cambridge. It is on my heart, once I have finished my training, to be sent to another inner city urban priority parish and to see the church built up and handed over to local leadership. And for those of you who noted my extolling the benefits of a corporate leadership resulting from no one person being paid, I am looking to Non Stipendiary Pioneer Ministry.

So what on earth am I doing here in Ridley (apart from not getting this essay written)? I hope I am responding to a call, which is probably the most any of us can hope to do.

In many ways not having the building has proved to be a blessing. We have been able to pay our way even with such a small congregation as our own overheads have been the rental costs of the hours we use various buildings and of course the endless quantities of coffee, tea and biscuits. But on a more profound level by needing to build partnerships with others in the community to survive, we have built relationships. We have found that coming from a position of powerlessness, having to ask if we could rent other people’s buildings, has helped us to be more integrated into this community. Also the fact that none of our congregation or leadership team were paid has resulted in a very corporate response to ministry. The call to reach our community is not one person’s job, but something we do together or we do not do at all. For most of this time in leadership I have also been in full time or part time employment.

We are all aware of many lay people exercising their gifts and ministries. A call to ministry does not necessitate a call to be licensed or ordained. Nor, I believe, should being a Reader or an ordained person be simply a vehicle for these other callings. To be a Reader or an ordained person is a calling in and of itself. Each of us will of course bring our own giftings and strengths to that call.

Katie Miller (left) and Bex Toft

Marlpit Community Centre
The Healing Word
Barbara Brown Taylor
SPCK, £9.99 pbk
9780281070350

The book’s sub-title, ‘Gospel Medicine for the Soul’ provides an accurate description of its contents. Within each of six main sections the author writes illuminating reflections based on a number of chosen Bible readings that give both meditative and preaching opportunities. This is a brilliant book and the Professor’s use of exegeses within scripture and faith is engaging, challenging and sometimes humorous. The cover should really contain a health warning to read only one section at a time, such are the depth of present-day ailments exposed. Highly recommended to those engaged in the ministry of healing or prayer groups, the book offers superb material for Readers in sermon preparation.

S. JOHN HAZEL

Uncovering Sin
Rosy Fairhurst
SPCK, £8.99 pbk
9780281068791

This book is designed as a seven-week course for Lent. Each week has the relevant Biblical passages quoted in full and two chapters of script, followed by some searching questions which can effectively be used for group discussion. This important subject is one Christians should explore although the title might not be the most encouraging to stimulate interest. The material is challenging and many of the author’s personal anecdotes. If I were to use this book as the basis for a Lent course I would have to do quite a lot of additional work to make it live for me and thus for the group. I would need to test it out on a small group before offering it as a Lent course to the wider congregation. The sub-title – a gateway to healing and calling – gives a clue to the level at which the course is pitched.

HUGH MORLEY

Prayers for Healing
David Adam, Rupert Bristow, Nick Fawcett, Susan Sayers, Ray Simpson
Kevin Mayhew, £8.99 pbk
9781848675926

This book is one of a set of three, the other titles being: Prayers for Comfort and Prayers for Joy and Thanksgiving. The 300 prayers in each are penned by the same five authors and have previously been published in other formats. There is a wealth of excellently written prayers of varying lengths in each volume, and it is a worthy resource for anyone preparing intercessions for services and indeed for personal use. Initially I had mixed feelings about the layout. Beyond a brief biography of the authors the books consist of only numbered prayers. How would I find what I needed? The answer is that these prayers are all so gloriously individual that an index would be impossible and I am blessed by browsing as I let God guide me to the right prayer for the occasion.

LIZ PACEY

With my whole heart
James Jones
SPCK, £8.99 pbk
9780281068050

In this book we share the author’s journey from a collapse in the House of Lords to hospital, followed by a serious operation and then into his time of recovery and convalescence. The Psalms spoke to him amazingly during his time of need. In his suffering he reflects on them and shares his thoughts with us. To me this is an ideal book for those facing such a hard experience. It is a book to keep alongside you when you need to feel you are not alone, directings us to the one who shares our journey and gives hope of something better to come. To me it was wonderful that one of our Bishops could share his journey with such openness and humility. My joy was that I came to know the author, as a person beyond robes and office, all of which were taken away in his illness. He opened up the Psalms in a wonderful way for me and brought them very much into my life.

SHEILA MOSTON

Reimagining Discipleship
Robert Cotton
SPCK, £12.99 pbk
9780281067190

The title is abstract and frankly unmemorable, but the sub-title tells us what the book is about: Loving the local community. In our recipes for discipleship one ingredient is often omitted – relating to the community. The emphasis in the book is largely we but the final chapter, ‘Experiencing Resurrection’, is concerned with personal conversion and faith and redresses any suggestion that faith is only possible as part of the community. The meat of the book is a rich distillation of the author’s experience, wisdom and spirituality, sometimes apparently haphazard, but then so is the Book of Proverbs. In short a valuable resource for 21st century disciples, not least those concerned with Fresh Expressions.

DEREK WOOD

The State of the Church and the Church of the State
Michael Turnbull and Donald McFadyen
DLT, £14.99 pbk
9780232528817

What is the role of the Church in the public arena? This is a question which the Church of England as an established church cannot avoid, but, as recent changes in legislation have shown, the nature of its relationship to the state has once again become a matter for debate. While there have been calls from both within and without for dis-establishment, the two authors of this important book argue coherently and effectively against any such move. After a thoughtful analysis of the rapid pace of social change, especially since the 1970s, they are nevertheless convinced that Establishment, properly understood, still has a vital role to play in ensuring that an awareness of the sacred remains an essential ingredient in our national life. They are concerned that by focusing too much on internal problems the Church of England may lose sight of its historic role to be (like the NHS) ‘open to all at the point of need’, providing a spiritual presence at both national and local level. There is thus a need to re-define and re-design our ways of ‘being church’ in order to re-build community values. While not everyone will agree with these conclusions, this is certainly a book to be read by all those anxious about the church’s future and relevance.

MARGARET IVES

The Underground Church
Robin Meyers
SPCK, £12.99 pbk
9780281069415

Like the baddie in an old-style western, this book bursts aggressively into the saloon bar of the traditional church, double doors swinging noisily behind. But the writer, a pastor in conservative Oklahoma, fires with authority from the inside. It’s a compassionate, strident and, ultimately, desperate plea for a subversive Christianity visibly swimming against the tide, setting loving action above correct belief, investing more time in the Sermon on the Mount than on the Nicene Creed. Practical action includes spending more on others than on itself; equating faith with trust rather than certainty; welcoming strangers of whatever colour and whoever they sleep with; rigorously testing the status quo against the raw gospel, and refusing to play chaplain to the Roman/British/American Empire. He shows how to do it, too. ‘Almost every good thing that happens in a church’, he writes, ‘happens when
people move toward God without knowing how anything is going to turn out. And almost everything bad happens when people move away from God because they are afraid.’

ALAN KERSHAW

John Sentamu’s Faith Stories
John Sentamu (ed.)
DLT, £8.99 pbk 978023529784

In his introduction to this book the Archbishop of York says: ‘Each of us has an incredible story to tell… I have selected a few examples of how individuals are putting God’s vision of love and care into action in new and exciting ways.’ There are twenty interesting stories of men and women, some lay, some now ordained, who have been willing to trust God and allow him to lead their own lives and so make a difference in the lives of others. Each of these personal stories begins with a brief description of the person concerned and a photograph (most of which are unfortunately rather poorly reproduced). John Sentamu provides a brief introduction to each story. The stories are all well told and interesting. Though written in the first person, they are actually written by Carmel Thomason. Many of these stories could provide Readers with useful sermon illustrations to show some of the different ways in which God calls and uses people to serve him.

HUGH SANSOM

Immortal Diamond
Richard Rohr
SPCK, £10.99 pbk 97802810870176

This profound little book on the nature of spirituality and mankind’s eternal quest for meaning has been designed to attract the un-churched seeker, pottering aimlessly in the ‘mind-body-spirit’ section of their bookshop. This is a pity, in a way, as it may put off mature Christians, who have not heard of Richard Rohr, (a maverick American Franciscan) from discovering some of the most accomplished and articulate Christian apologists I have read for some time. Sub-titled ‘the search for our true self’ Rohr examines the ego (which he terms the ‘False Self’) and demonstrates how it can prevent us developing a mature spirituality. Only once ego is stripped away, will we be able to make contact with our ‘True Self’, the immortal diamond of the title. Rohr draws on insights from Buddhist spirituality as well as the Christian scriptures, which might give those involved in spiritual direction fresh perspectives. Those in a preaching ministry will find many surprising insights and turns of phrase to stimulate their own thinking.

KIRSTY ANDERSON

The Gift of Mission
James H Kroeger (ed)
Orbis, £31.99 pbk 9781626980129

Maryknoll is the leading Roman Catholic overseas mission society in the United States. This book is a collection of 31 papers presented at the 100th anniversary meeting and tells of the history and possible future of mission in East Asia, China, Japan, Korea, Latin America and Africa. The struggles and sacrifices of men and women, both religious and lay, who comprise the society are outlined, mainly from an RC perspective, but with acknowledgement of Protestant and Orthodox mission; there is deep consideration of the theology of mission and how it is to be undertaken in a pluralistic world. There are lots of ideas based on experience, but the papers are generally short and complete within themselves. It is an expensive book, and if you want to sample it to see if it is for you, it is available on books.google.co.uk – put in the title. Highly recommended for missionologists.

JOHN FOXLEE

A Thousand and One Prayers
Gerald O’Mahony
Kevin Mayhew, £16.99 pbk 97818467553

Never judge a book by its cover; but with this one, make an exception! The attractive teal cover is very inviting and its contents do not disappoint. This book is what it says, a collection of short prayers that have been usefully sorted into categories that are simple and straightforward. There are 45 categories to choose from ranging from those related to the church calendar to ‘Two sides of the Gospel’ and ‘Ignatian Spirit’. I would recommend this book as a tool to have when preparing any form of public worship, though not necessarily for personal prayer. Overall a useful resource to have at hand.

TERESA MARY CSC

Transforming Preaching
David Heywood
SPCK, £12.99 pbk 9780281063413

David Heywood is well read and has experience from a wide variety of churches. He draws on his former teaching experience to show what motivates people to listen and to engage, gives advice on preparing and structuring sermons; writing for the ear rather than reading an essay, and on interactive preaching. Like many of us, he knows instinctively when he is on the right track as a passage lights up and resolves itself. Similarly, our doubts about the effectiveness of our message can often be contradicted by someone telling us that it spoke to their situation. He advises us to be ourselves but to be our best selves. Heywood is concerned to bridge the gap between the university and the pew but I disagree with him when he asks whether a congregation really need to know that the gospels misrepresent the Pharisees. With its 26 reflective exercises, this would make a good DIY refresher course for preachers as there is always more to learn.

DEREK JAY

Creative Ideas for Frontline Evangelism with Young People
Simon Rundell
Canterbury Press, £19.99 pbk 978184987553

The title of this book is misleading. I was expecting ideas for building relationships with young people who have not explored Christianity in any way. What we find, however, is a stirring series of sessions for young people who have already chosen to come along to a youth group (whether that is held in church or secondary school). The material does not expect any prior knowledge of the Bible or the Christian narrative and this is a real strength. The sessions look at who is Jesus, miracles, transformation and victory. Each session includes an introduction, a story version of (usually) a Bible passage, an activity and an application. The CD-ROM provides helpful resources and the QR codes are fun links to follow. There is nothing cringe-worthy in this book – it can be used with confidence with teenagers.

RONA ORME
Friends, Foes and Families
Judith Dimond
SPCK, £7.99 pbk
9780281064564

This book of ‘Lenten meditations on Bible characters and relationships’, divided into seven weeks, takes us from Ash Wednesday through to the beginnings of the early church. Each section has meditations for every day, beginning with Sunday; all are focused on a particular relationship, and interspersed with Bible references and prayers, and thoughts on how we conduct our own relationships. The first, appropriately, begins with Fathers, with examples from Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son: Abraham, Father of Nations, and concludes with Jesus’ teaching on the Lord’s Prayer. Through this pattern, Judith Dimond brings us back at the end of each week to Jesus’ life and ministry as he progresses towards the cross. Some of the meditations work better than others but they should generate many thoughts and questions about the integrity of our own relationships and how we behave towards those we meet, friend or stranger. It would be equally useful for individual meditation, or for a house group.

MARIE PATERSON

Silence – a Christian History
Diarmaid MacCulloch
Allen Lane, £20.00 hbk
9781844144264

As the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, there is ‘a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.’ (Eccles 3:7). There is a careful balance to be struck between silence and speaking but as Bonhoeffer points out silence ‘is the simple stillness of the individual under the Word of God.’

MacCulloch’s erudite analysis of how silence has played an important part in worship since the early days of Judaism up to the present is the subject of the first three sections of this book. It makes fascinating reading as he draws out the contrast between, for example, the silence and stillness of Psalm 62, and the exuberant, noisy celebrations of Psalm 150.

As always, MacCulloch makes history interesting and accessible, but this book goes further as part four is written from a particular and very personal perspective. Here, MacCulloch analyses how the Church as an institution has used silence in ways which can only be described as political. His own experience of remaining silent as a gay man is key to all this. The pain of not feeling able to be true to oneself creates a special empathy with those who have been hurt by the Church’s silence on slavery and more latterly child abuse.

The Church’s silent complicity with evil, including the evil of the Holocaust, has left it with a burden of guilt which needs to be acknowledged before it can be purged.

MacCulloch has given us a rare treat – an interesting and careful historical account, coupled with a deeply personal and insightful analysis of the right and wrong use of silence. It is strongly recommended.

MARION GRAY

Excellent Dr Stanley: The Life of Dean Stanley of Westminster
John Withenry
Michael Russell (Publishing) Ltd. £24 hbk
9780859553230

John Withenry’s life of Dean Arthur Penrhyn Stanley is a scholarly, well referenced and enjoyable long read to be wholly recommended. Stanley, born in 1815 into a well connected family (his father was later a Bishop of Norwich), may not be well known to the contemporary reader unless, as Withenry points out, you possess a ‘taste for ecclesiastical Victoriania.’ His early claim to fame, aged 28, was as biographer of Thomas Arnold, the distinguished headmaster of Rugby.

Stanley’s book quickly became a runaway success and established surely Arnold’s standing as a model public school headmaster. Arnold had tutored the young Stanley at Rugby and as Withenry ably shows, he proved to be a seminal influence in shaping not only Stanley’s life-long liberal and broad theological views but also his wide-ranging and generous attitude towards people of all classes and beliefs. Stanley’s final seventeen years, until his death in 1881, were spent as Dean of Westminster Abbey. During this time, with the loving support of his wife Augusta (Queen Victoria’s favourite lady-in-waiting) the Abbey was shaped energetically and devotedly into the national sanctuary and place of pilgrimage it has become. Stanley emerges moreover as a churchman occupied constructively in many of the major controversies affecting the nineteenth century national Church. However, profound knowledge of the ecclesiastical and political history of this era is largely unnecessary since Withenry provides commendably a sufficient backdrop to Stanley’s input. For Readers with a working knowledge in shaping not only Stanley’s life-long liberal and broad theological views but also his wide-ranging and generous attitude towards people of all classes and beliefs. Stanley’s final seventeen years, until his death in 1881, were spent as Dean of Westminster Abbey. During this time, with the loving support of his wife Augusta (Queen Victoria’s favourite lady-in-waiting) the Abbey was shaped energetically and devotedly into the national sanctuary and place of pilgrimage it has become. Stanley emerges moreover as a churchman occupied constructively in many of the major controversies affecting the nineteenth century national Church. However, profound knowledge of the ecclesiastical and political history of this era is largely unnecessary since Withenry provides commendably a sufficient backdrop to Stanley’s input. For Readers with a working knowledge

JONATHAN ROSE

Places of Enchantment
Graham B Usher
9780281067923

If you’ve ever felt restricted by the four walls of your church building, Canon Graham Usher’s marvellous new book will explain what to do about it. This thoughtful work is perfect for anyone seeking a sense of the sacred in the landscape.

Such a wide-ranging book almost serves as a search engine for the spiritual connections that people can make with the places they live. Examples are drawn from every place and era: a section on mountains proceeds from the poet Wordsworth to St Francis of Assisi’s holy mountain to George Mallory gazing upwards at the foot of Mount Everest.

The book is structured around elements of the landscape rather than abstract theological concepts. This is how most people relate to the world: rivers rather than baptism, forests rather than the cross, deserts rather than monasticism. Yet as Canon Usher elegantly demonstrates, each enriches our experience of the other.

It is an area that the church has seemingly abandoned, National Trust tearooms taking over the role of pilgrims’ wayside hostels. The consequences of ignoring Christianity’s most popular achievements are all too evident. Canon Usher’s book is an inspiring reminder that we
have a bigger picture to admire, a broader canvas on which to write our message.

NICK MAYHEW-SMITH

Francis, Bishop of Rome
Michael Collins
Columba Press, £7.99 pbk
9781782180661

Beginning with the new Pontiff’s early life in Argentina, the author outlines Jorge Bergoglio’s calling to the priesthood and years of ministry in the Latin American Church, leading up to the sudden abdication of Pope Benedict and unexpected election of the new Pope. Areas of controversy regarding the alleged collusion of the Roman Catholic Church with the military dictatorship in Argentina are touched upon. However, this is a largely sympathetic biography and the subject is not explored in great depth. A likeable picture emerges of a man devoted to the service of Christ and to the poor and oppressed. There are plenty of biographies of Pope Francis available so it may be worth looking at other options before deciding which to purchase. However, at 121 pages, this book is easily understood by non-Catholics and is ideal for Readers seeking a short, uncontroversial biography of Pope Francis.

CHRISTINE BELSHAM

Soundings in the Religion of Jesus
Chilton, Le Donne & Neuser (Eds.)
Fortress Press, £32.99 pbk
(2012) 9780800698010

The sub-title of this book is Perspectives and Methods in Jewish and Christian Scholarship. It is a collection of scholarly essays in memory of Professor Alan Segal, ‘a perceptive and analytical scholar of Judaism’s relationship to Christianity’. There are 29 pages of notes, a full bibliography and an index of ancient Jewish and Christian sources. The authors come from a wide range of both Christian and Jewish traditions. Of key significance for Readers is the exploration of the extent of the ‘Jewishness’ of Jesus and the necessity of facing both explicit and covert prejudices with which everybody approaches the topic.

The first essay focuses on translations of the words ‘Jesus’ and ‘Jew’ over the years from Aramaic and Hebrew into Greek, Latin and ultimately English so that ‘Jesus, in the eyes of Christians and even Jews, … ceased to be a Jew’ (p.12) via the translator becoming a commentator. A later essay (Chapter 7) celebrates how the work of philologists has ‘unpicked the nuances’ in different languages and eras with regard to other words such as ‘miracle’. Two fascinating essays consider parts of Matthew’s Gospel from a Jewish perspective.

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the tensions that arose in Hitler’s Germany for Christians concerning the Jewishness of Jesus including much earlier Christian expressions of anti-Judaism exemplified by some of Augustine of Hippo’s and Luther’s writings. A more positive attitude to Judaism and the Jewishness of Jesus gradually emerges in post-1945 German theological writing.

In James Dunn’s reflection he spells out where he agrees with and differs from some aspects of the earlier chapters but concludes that collectively they highlight a series of issues for further Jewish-Christian dialogue. The complimentary chapter from a Jewish scholar offers the reflection that whereas ‘for Christianity the Torah prepares the way; for Judaism the Torah is the way.’ Overall the whole volume is an excellent exercise in the value of scholarly disputation from a range of theological backgrounds at a very high level and on massively important issues for both Jews and Christians; it should be on the reading list of every programme of Reader training.

DAVID SELLICK

All these books were published in 2013 unless otherwise stated.

Need to know more?

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Enjoying life in the departure lounge
Christian author David Winter wrote this book when he became 80. He sees old age as a phase of life as excitingly different as becoming a teenager. There are now one and a half million people in Britain who are over 85 and this figure set to increase. He attempts to record ‘what it is like finally to move into the departure lounge of life, awaiting the call to board our flight from this life to whatever it is that God has planned for us at its end.’ BRF £6.99

FIRST WORLD WAR HOME FRONT

For the majority of people today it is the horrors of trench warfare along the Western Front of Belgium and France that most characterise the First World War. But, largely forgotten, is the fact that virtually the whole of England was turned to the war effort: the first ‘Home Front’. As part of the 2014-2018 Centenary, English Heritage has initiated a major project to record the colossal ‘footprint’ left by the First World War on the fabric, landscape and coastal waters of England. Ten things you never knew about the First World War: http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/first-world-war-home-front/ten-things-about-first-world-war

COMMEMORATION PROJECTS

Culture Secretary Maria Miller, who leads for the Government on First World War commemorations, has announced a plan to double the numbers of listed war memorials, using the volunteer input of the War Memorials Trust. She said: ‘This centenary comes at a point where living memory becomes written history, so it is absolutely essential that our work to mark it speaks clearly to young people in particular. For full details of English Heritage's First World War projects go to: http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/first-world-war-home-front

WILD POPPY SEEDS, also known as Papaver rhoeas, Corn Poppy, Field Poppy or Flanders Poppy could be used to help remember the Imperial War Museum: http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search

USEFUL WEBSITES RELATING TO WW1:
http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search is the website for the Imperial War Museum
http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/world-war-i has some useful quotes

WEB SITE LAUNCH

The All Saints Centre for Mission & Ministry, which trains ordinands and Readers part-time across six dioceses in the North-west and East Midlands, has launched a new website. http://allsaintscentre.org The Rev Simon Chesters can also be contacted on 07580 006006 or email simon.chesters@liverpool.anglican.org
BATH AND WELLS
Admitted and Licensed 05 October 2013
Richard Beath ........................................ Peasedown, St John with Wellow and Foxcote with Shoscombe
Kathryn Clarke ........................................ Taunton, St James
Martin Collett ........................................ Dulverton with Brushford, Upton & Skilgate
Richard Graham ................................ United Benefice of Middlezoy, Othery, Moorlynch & Greinton
Diane Greter ............................................ Glastonbury, Abbey Parishes
Ruth Hattersley ...................................... Larkhall, St Saviour with Swainswick & Woolley
Stephen Howard ................................. Bathwick, St Mary the Virgin
Marian Marlow ....................................... Bath, St Michael’s Without
Pam Norman ........................................ Larkhall, St Saviour with Swainswick & Woolley
Jill Perryman ........................................ Street and Walton, Holy Trinity
Rachel Shaw .......................................... Keynsham
Jonathan Stobart ................................ Balmoral
Admitted and Licensed 05 October 2013
Gloria Birdsall ........................................ Blackpool, St Thomas
Karen Ball .............................................. Garstang, St Helen (Churchtown) and St Michael’s on Wyre
Gloria Birdsall ........................................ Blackpool, St Thomas
Gary Bullock .......................................... Heapey, St Barnabas and Withnell, St Paul
William Burns ........................................ Fleetwood, St Peter
Timothy Cox .......................................... Bisham, All Hallows
Ann Gray .............................................. Broughton, St John Baptist
Janet Haworth ........................................ Salesbury, St Peter
Barbara Houghton ................................ Blackpool, St Thomas
Alan Hutchings ...................................... Over Kellet, St Cuthbert
Lisa Peynado .......................................... Colne and Villages Team Ministry
Christine Ritson ................................. Accrington, St John with Huncoat, St Augustine
Kathleen Sturzaker ................................ Longridge, St Lawrence with St Paul
Emma Swarbrick ................................ Fulwood, Christ Church
03 November
Philip Deegan ....................................... Thornton-le-Fylde, Christ Church
Licensed
Geoffrey Moore ...................................... Heysham, St Peter

BRADFORD
Admitted and Licensed 28 September 2013
Sally Browning .................................... East Morton, St Luke and Riddlesden, St Mary
Elspeeth Candsdale ............................... East Morton, St Luke and Riddlesden, St Mary
Paul Christodoulou ................................. Broughton, All Saints, Marton, St Peter and Thornton, St Mary
Anne Hilton .......................................... Clayton, St John
Angela Johnson ..................................... Idle, Holy Trinity
Steven Nuttall ........................................ Wrose, St Cuthbert
Licensed
Maurice Hatton ..................................... Sutton with Cowling and Lothersdale
Julie Shield ............................................ Washburn Valley and Mid Wharf
Valerie Thomas ..................................... Sorted (a Fresh Expression)

CHELMSFORD
Admitted and Licensed October 2013
Isabel Adcock ........................................ Tolleshunt D’arcy, St Nicholas and Tolleshunt Major, St Nicholas
Jane Begley .......................................... Waltham Holy Cross Team Ministry
Jacqueline Lindoe ................................. Westcliff on Sea, St Peter w St Cedd and the Saints of Essex
Rhona McEune .................................... Bradwell on Sea and St Lawrence
John Shaw ............................................ Basildon, St Andrew w Holy Cross
Maggie Wilson ..................................... Frinton, St Mary Magdalen
Stacie Withers .................................... Mistley w Manningtree, St Mary and St Michael
Licensed
Allison Cline-Dean ............................... Chelmsford Cathedral
Peter Norgate ...................................... Rayleigh Team Ministry
Anne Wild .......................................... Thurstable and Winstree Team Ministry
Tim Whitfield ..................................... North Blackwater Parishes

CHESTER
Admitted and Licensed 19 October 2013
Heather Adams .................................... Edgeley and Chedle Heath
Pam Attree .......................................... Dodleston, St Mary
Alan Bancroft ...................................... Romiley, St Chad
Kate Bennett ........................................... Gee Cross, Holy Trinity
Alison Boulton ..................................... Moulton, St Stephen the Martyr
Karen Brady ........................................ Stockton Heath, St Thomas and Appleton, St Mary Magdalen
David Capener ...................................... Poynton, St George
Hilary Chambers .................................... Sandiway, St John the Evangelist
Anne Davidson Lund ............................ Crowton, Christ Church
Ginnie Gerearts .................................... Davenham, St Wilfrid
Simon Gowler ........................................ Witton (Northwich), St Helen
Colin Horrabin ...................................... Thewall, All Saints
Chris Jones ............................................ Chester Cathedral
Lynn Keeley .......................................... Newton, St Mary with Flowery Field
Richard Kells ........................................ Moreton, Christ Church
Nick Sanders ........................................ Mellor, St Thomas
Karl Williams ....................................... Wallasey, St Nicholas
Lisa Davies .......................................... HMP Styal
Gordon James ...................................... Prestbury, St Peter
Nan Williams ........................................ Chester, St John

CHICHESTER
Admitted and Licensed 21 September 2013
Mark Alderton .................................... Southgate, St Mary
Joy Gilliver .......................................... Brighton, The Annunciation
Alison Hassell ....................................... Battle, St Mary the Virgin
Charmaine Hill .................................... Hollington, St John the Evangelist
Steve Moyise ........................................ Chichester, St Wilfrid
Carol Shepherd .................................. Itchingfield, St Nicholas
Clive Simmonds ................................... Cuckfield, Holy Trinity
Alec Syne ............................................. Ticehurst, St Mary the Virgin

Admitted and Licensed 3 November 2013
David White ........................................ Angmering, St Margaret
Licensed
John Roberts ........................................ Angmering, St Margaret
DERBY
Admitted and Licensed 22 September 2013
Jill Bailey ................................................................. Benefice of Littleover
Ann Conroy ................................................................. Benefice of Walton
Kate Gee ................................................. Benefice of Charlesworth-with-Gamesley and Dinting Vale
Yvonne Haywood ..................................................... North Wingfield Team Ministry
(Danesmoor, St Barnabas)
Brenda Jackson ................................................. Benefice of Bakewell,
Ashford in the water with Sheldon and Rowsley
Julie Jones ................................................................. Benefice of Littleover
June Lomas ................................................................. Benefice of Hulland, Atlow, Kniveton,
Bradley and Hogmaston
Ben Pellereau ................................................................. Benefice of Littleover
Tim Wheeler ................................................................. Benefice of Brampton, St Thomas

LEICESTER
Admitted and Licensed 12 October 2013
Philip Benner ........................................................ Coalville with Bardon Hill and Ravenstone
Jean Lee ................................................................. South Framland
Martin Lowdon ......................................................... Lutterworth with Cotesbach and Bitteswell
Rex Shaw ................................................................. Wymeswold and Prestwold with Hoton
Andrew Smith ......................................................... Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Breedon on the Hill
Mollie Toye ................................................................. Lutterworth with Cotesbach and Bitteswell
David Hitchcock ......................................................... Hugglescote with Donington, Ellis Town and Snibston
Linda Pearson ........................................................ Melton Mowbray Team
Ian Dutton ................................................................. Anstey and Thorcaston with Cropston

LICHFIELD
Admitted and Licensed 7 September 2013
Paul Hadley ............................................................... Church Eaton, Derrington and Haughton
Susan Coyme ................................................................. Aldridge
John Davenport ......................................................... Llanbyblodwel, St Michael the Archangel
and Llanymynech, St Agatha, Morton,
St Philip and St James and Trefonen, All Saints
Carole Ellis ................................................................. Airewas, All Saints
Dianna Firmin ......................................................... Shrewsbury, Holy Cross, Monkmoor,
St Peter and The Abbey
Jillian Poole ................................................................. Wem, St Peter and St Paul and Lee Brokhurst, St Peter
Alan Turner ................................................................. The Leek and Meerbrouk Team

LINCOLN
Admitted and Licensed 12 October 2013
Nicola Bradbury ........................................................ Sibsey and Carrington Group; Brothertoft Group
Kathryn Butter ........................................................ Woodhall Spa Group
Graham Cuthbert ......................................................... Woodhall Spa Group
Peter Dalby ................................................................. Woodhall Spa Group
Simon Dean ................................................................. Waddington, St Michael
Dr Pat Frankish ............................................................ Kirkton Lindsey
Quin Hough ................................................................. Middle Rasen & Barkwith Groups
Kate Hutchinson ......................................................... Cleethorpes, St Aidan & Grimsby, Old Clee
Shirley Keyes ................................................................. Legbourne Wold Marsh
Dr Chris Knight ............................................................. Boston
Dave Parkinson ............................................................. Skirbeck, Holy Trinity
Sylvia Pounds ................................................................. Louth
Martin Purnell ............................................................. Stamford, St George
Sue Slater ................................................................. Spalding, St Mary and St Nicolas
Margaret Smith ........................................................ Woodhall Spa Group

LONDON
Admitted and Licensed 26 November 2013
Anita Compton .......................................................... Highgate St Anne
Christine Denny ......................................................... North Finchley Christ Church
Colin Izard ................................................................. Mill Hill St Michael and All Angels

Admitted and Licensed 5 September
Clare Heard ......................................................... St George the Martyr Campden Hill with St John
the Baptist Holland Rd

NEWCASTLE
Admitted and Licensed 5 October 2013
Helen Bishopp ......................................................... Alnmouth, St John the Baptist
Kathleen Germain ......................................................... Benwell, Venerable Bede
Pamela Nobbs ................................................................. Lee, St John
Samuel Palin ................................................................. Amble, St Cuthbert

PORTSMOUTH
Admitted and Licensed 15 September 2013
Michael Fluck ......................................................... Havant, St Faith
Amber Vincent-Prior ............................................. Farlington, The Resurrection with St Andrew

RIPON AND LEEDS
Admitted and Licensed 7 October 2013
Jan Ali ................................................................. The Epiphany, Gipton
Shelley Dring ......................................................... Moor Allerton & Shadwell Team Ministry
Rosemary Oliver .......................................................... St, Matthew, Chapel Allerton
Sheila lee-Woolhouse ............................................ Kirklington w Burneston & Wath & Pickhill
Lynne Pickersgill ............................................................ St, Mary, Whitkirk
Marie Smalley ................................................................. The Benefice of Hipswell

SALISBURY
Admitted and Licensed 28 September 2013
Yvonne Allen ............................................................. Wylye and Till Valley Team
Michael Barratt ......................................................... Clarendon Team
Christopher Rees ......................................................... Atworth with Shaw and Whitley
Elfrieda Mill ................................................................. Wimborne Minster
Susan Le Riche ................................................................. Okeford Benefice
Josephine Johnson .......................................................... Shaftesbury
John Patterson ................................................................. Parkstone, St Luke

Licensed
Joseph Field ................................................................. Red Post Team
Christine Lim ............................................................. Hamworthy
Caroline McKeown ....................................................... Devizes, St John
Carol Neilson ................................................................. Chase Benefice
Rachel Pound ................................................................. North Bradford-on-Avon and Villages
Vivienne Roerters .............................................................. Hamworthy
Penelope Wallis ................................................................. Pimperne, Stourpaine, Durweston and Bryanston

Welcome
Philippa Smart ............................................................. Salisbury, St Mark

TRURO
Admitted and Licensed 5 October 2013
Steven Brown ............................................................. Illogan, St Illogan
Margaret Durpsley ......................................................... Redruth, St Andrew
Roy Holmes ................................................................. Wadebridge, St Breoke and Eglosheayle, St Petroc
Marcus Jones ................................................................. St Budock, St Budock
Margaret Sylvester-Thorne ........................................ St Germans Parish Group
Denise Turner ................................................................. Illogan, St Illogan
At last – the survey results!

No, it didn’t all disappear into a black hole – it was just that so many of you responded it took a while to analyse the data and sort through the comments to put it all in some kind of order.

We had an amazing response – almost 10%, which is about five times what I was told to expect. Nearly 900 survey forms were returned, and I also had a number of emails and letters. So, thank you all very much.

Of course there was a wide variety of views expressed, so it will not be possible to meet everyone’s wishes given that, as you might expect, some people want X and some want not X. For example, some people would like more in-depth articles while others feel the magazine is too ‘heavy’. We will continue to try to keep a balance, but this may not work in every issue. In general there was no clamour for a complete change so we feel justified in continuing broadly with the current pattern of themed issues, although in future the theme may be less predominant, which seemed to be a particular point for many people.

The most important point to make is that the number one issue – that the magazine should contain more articles written by Readers about what they do – is something we can do very little about. That is, unless you are prepared to write something yourself. We don’t promise to publish every unsolicited article you send in, but if you see in the Editorial that a particular theme is coming up about which you have knowledge or experience, then do contact Heather and offer an article. We don’t know what each of you does so unless you take the initiative we can only approach the people we know about.

However, we have taken on board some requests, and from the next issue some small changes will appear. A lot of people requested a letters page. The kind of letters we would like are ones in which you share your response to an article, or about an event you have experienced – so that we could print an extract under the heading ‘What made me think’. We can’t really accommodate on-going correspondence because of the time-lag between planning and publication, so if you want to have a conversation with someone about an issue, why not use the Forum on the CRC website?

There were several requests for seasonal material especially related to sermon preparation. It may not be possible to include something in every issue, but we will certainly be working on this starting in the summer issue, when there will be something looking forward to harvest. I am also hoping it will be possible to have a review article on commentaries on the Gospel of Mark in preparation for Year B, in the autumn issue.

There were many positive comments about the book reviews section. We are trying to get a better balance across a wider spectrum of publishers, and also hoping to make the reviews more helpful with each one being slightly longer, although this does mean fewer reviews.

Another important point for many was the inclusion of more CRC news, so from the next issue the CRC will have four pages which will include the Gazette, In Memoriam and Last Word, as well as news from meetings, information about events including conferences and the AGM.

There was very little enthusiasm for an electronic version of the magazine, either because people prefer to have a printed copy which they can easily carry around or because they do not have internet access for one reason or another. If you are keen to have an electronic version, you can access all the back issues via the CRC website, where all but the current issue are available.

One final change – although most people said they wouldn’t want to see more advertising, several did say that they understand that advertising is necessary to keep costs down. We are going to increase the amount of advertising slightly because at the moment the magazine runs at quite a large loss each year. We can’t cover this loss by continually increasing the cover price, so the only solution is to have more advertising although we will be careful to ensure that it doesn’t become too obtrusive especially on the inside pages.

It probably seems that we are being very slow with the introduction of these changes, but we plan a long way ahead, and the process of finding writers, getting the material in and assembling it in a well-designed and coherent way all takes time, given that everyone involved has a life beyond the magazine.

So you can see there isn’t going to be a revolution, but maybe some evolutionary changes to get us nearer to what you want. The changes outlined above have been discussed by the Editorial Committee so if you want to respond your comments should come to me as Chair, rather than to Heather who is the Editor. Please write to me at marion_gray@talk21.com or at the Central Readers Council, Ministry Division, Church House, Great Smith Street, LONDON, SW1P 3AZ.

Once again, my thanks to everyone who took part in our survey.
**In Memoriam**

The deaths of the following Readers have been notified to us

Bath & Wells  
Margaret Gilder

Blackburn  
Dr Margaret Coles  
Yvonne Tomlinson

Chelemsford  
Christine Caydon

Chester  
Libby Leete

Chichester  
Mary Ball  
David Burchell  
Brian Nicholas (Nick) Egerton  
Edward Farrington  
Margaret Jenner

Durham  
Brenda Seed

Diocese in Europe  
Peter Jones  
Bill Woodend

Manchester  
Frank Davies

Newcastle  
Sue Bumstead

Norwich  
Freddie Hetherington-Sims

London  
John Milbank  
David Coster

Rochester  
Michael Ayles  
N Rutherford

St Albans  
Bill Goode

Salisbury  
John Davies  
Stephanie Dawson  
Peter Woods

Truro  
Roger Pattinson

Wakefield  
Helen Bentley

Winchester  
Robin Murray-Walker

Worcester  
John Turner  
Paul Westcott

Aberdeen & Orkney  
Bill Underwood

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**Last Word**

Back in 2010 I wrote this column about two maiden aunts of mine who lived in retirement on the wonderful Mawddach Estuary near Barmouth. Maiden aunts were a phenomenon familiar to the ‘baby-boomer’ generation, because lots of women born around 1900 were never able to marry. There were simply too few young men to go round after the huge losses of the First World War.

I was reminded of this because the topic for this issue of *The Reader* is directly related to the centenary of the outbreak of World War 1. Last September I spent a week in Northern France in the very areas where this vast slaughter of young men took place.

This is not the proper place to express an opinion on the events of 1914–1918 from the perspective of an historian – but I can certainly see a great deal of evil in war, not just in the first half of the twentieth century, but now as well.

What is wonderful is that God is able to meet even the worst situations that humankind presents him with. He gave comfort to the millions, on both sides, who were plunged into mourning and despair by the slaughter in the trenches and even gave many new hope and new vocations. I worked for some years as administrator to an Anglican convent. It achieved its greatest numerical strength in the years after 1918, as God awakened fresh, fulfilling vocations in those for whom the life of family and motherhood, that they had anticipated, had become impossible.

Obviously not all single women became nuns! When I was a child, two ladies in their late sixties lived in a house opposite. They were Mrs L and Miss H. My parents explained that one had lost her husband and the other her fiancé in the First War.

I only discovered later that Miss H was of German origin and her friendship with Mrs L began well after the war when they met and compared their very similar stories of loss and bereavement. Perhaps God can be seen to have brought them together, helping them overcome their common distress and to forget the enmity that had once existed between their different nations.

He will always find a way forward for us too – as individuals, but also in our ministries, if we feel from time to time that it is difficult to see where we are going.

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Alan Wakely  
Secretary, Central Readers’ Council
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