

Signs of the Times

The newsletter of Modern Church

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In this issue

Editorial: Varieties of radicalism <i>Anthony Woollard</i>	1
How should we address God in public worship? pt 2 <i>Jean Mayland</i>	3
What's in a name? <i>Lorraine Cavanagh responds to 'How should we address God in public worship? pt 1' by Jean Mayland</i>	5
Calling time on titles <i>Will Baynes</i>	6
A year of being a widower <i>Richard Darlington</i>	6
BOOK REVIEWS: <i>Abraham's children: Jew, Christian, Muslim - Commonality and conflict & Making Sense of Militant Islam</i> by Anne Davidson (In Brief Series: Books for Busy People, 2014) <i>Alan Wolfe</i> <i>Archbishop Justin Welby: Risk-Taker And Reconciler</i> by Andrew Atherstone (DLT, 2014) <i>Ian Funnell</i> <i>Sanctuary: Poems by Martyn Halsall</i> (Canterbury Press, 2014) <i>Tim Pearce</i>	8
From our new administrator	10
<i>Re-thinking Worship</i> by Jan Berry	11
Student Sunday – 21st February 2016	11
Diana Butler-Bass leads Day Conference honouring Marcus Borg	12

Editorial: Varieties of radicalism

Anthony Woollard

Is radicalism a good thing? And what does it amount to anyway?

Many Modern Church members would want to espouse positions which to some worshippers would seem radical. These might include our use of language (especially inclusive language) in worship, or changes in our attitudes to authority in the Church - both these issues are addressed in this edition. But sometimes it is not clear who the real radicals are. On one very live current issue - assisted dying - our constituency is very divided, with a social and often theological radical such as Giles Fraser taking what some would regard as a conservative view (though he himself might see it as a radical one). And when it comes to church governance, and people talk of such ideas as disestablishment (a concept which is as long as a piece of string), similar divisions may be observed.

Perhaps David Hayward, the author of the book reviewed in our last edition by Kieran Bohan, is right to say that, on the issues that really matter, 'questions are the answer'. Yet that book itself illustrates a radical path: the pilgrimage of a pastor who has felt called to move right outside the institutional Church in order to get away from damaging authoritarianism. Most of us would not feel called to go that far, and I for one have my doubts about trying to extract the best of Christian tradition from a point outside the corporate embodiment of that tradition. But we do ▶

Modern Church

General Secretary: Canon Guy Elsmore

email: gensec@modernchurch.org.uk

Administrator: Diane Kutar

email: office@modernchurch.org.uk **tel:** 0845 345 1909

Modern Church is an international society promoting liberal theology.

Founded in 1898 to defend liberalism in the Church of England, we now work ecumenically to encourage open, enquiring, non-dogmatic approaches to Christianity.

Signs of the Times

Editor: Anthony Woollard

email: signsofthetimes@modernchurch.org.uk **tel:** 01789 204923

Signs of the Times is published in January, April, July and October.

It provides news and information about Modern Church and offers members an opportunity to communicate with each other in print. We welcome articles, notices, poems, suggestions, comments and suitable accompanying graphics. Articles published do not necessarily reflect a Modern Church perspective - in keeping with our commitment to liberal theology we believe that other views should be heard.

Send material to the editor by 8th December, 8th March, 8th June or 8th September. Articles should not normally exceed 1,000 words.

We prefer email but will process typed or handwritten text (phone for a postal address).

need to be reminded just how damaging encounters with the Church can be to some people - the strongest possible motivation for getting these things right.

A radical approach to the language we use may well be part of that. We include the second part of Jean Mayland's article on how we address God in worship, and Lorraine Cavanagh's challenging reply to her first part! This time Jean focuses on inclusive language. Her reminders of the history of recent discussions are enlightening, if at times depressing. The use of inclusive language in contemporary hymn books has grown considerably; official liturgies have lagged behind. This may not immediately matter greatly to many people, but it is a very real issue for others. And even those who feel that too much attention is given to 'political correctness' may be affected at a subconscious level more than they realise. Does it matter that we may be in thrall to an image of God, not only as male but as Father (a hugely dominant image, which not all find helpful in their own experience) - and a Victorian paterfamilias, with distinct mediaeval overtones, at that?

Will Baynes' wry article - a little more Trollopian as one might expect from him - is also about language and names. How far does 'the humility of the Church of England' (come again?) facilitate an authority structure which sends out seriously misleading messages about the status and role of the parish priest as well as other dignitaries? Will does not directly address the use of 'Father', but this not only raises an obvious problem where women clergy are concerned, but may also give out exactly the same wrong messages as the use of exclusive language about God may do. There is a strain within the culture of our Church, by no means restricted to Anglo-Catholics, which exalts the responsibility of the priest/minister/pastor as a mediator of precisely that authoritarian paternalism which is attributed to God. The idea of freehold and possession of a 'living' - once a marketable commodity - surely reinforces this, and I am hopeful of including in a future edition some thoughts by Nick Henderson on that subject. As a liberal catholic I have to ask whether it is possible to develop an ecclesiology, of the sort at which Lorraine hints, in which priestly sacramental ministry is properly honoured within the whole ministry of God's people rather than something above and apart from it. One of the huge strengths of Modern Church is that clergy and laity mix together at every point and it is often difficult to remember which is which; each contributes according to his or her gifts.

What about a radical suggestion that a friend recently made to me, that the separate Houses in Synods should be abolished? That might look like a logical extension of what I have said above. Some would say that the existence of Houses of Laity is a protection against complete domination of church governance by a clerical caste. Others might argue that all that it does, at national level anyway, is create a caste of 'professional laity', like the increasing domination of Westminster by professional politicians. What would happen, I wonder, if one or more dioceses, as an experiment, did abolish the House system, and clergy and laity had to stand for election against each other? Would it break down the caste structure or make it worse? A radical thought, which would need pragmatic evaluation. And the impact of such a move on the image of the clergy, and hence the self-image of the laity, is all but impossible to evaluate.

All these are important preoccupations for Christian spirituality. But they must not be allowed to deflect us from the huge issues which face our world. Central to our book review section in this issue is a first look (to be continued we hope) at the work of Anne Davison, who has long been associated both with Modern Church and with the Church's work on interfaith issues, on the crucial topic of radical Islam. That is another sort of radicalism, and one where questions are most certainly not seen as the answer - what, here, is the relationship between radicalism and destructive dogmatism? If understanding 'the other' is difficult enough within the Christian community and has often given rise to real conflicts, that challenge is multiplied tenfold when we look at what has been happening in the Islamic world over recent decades. This is literally a matter of life and death for individuals and for whole nations. The terrible events of Friday 13 November in Paris, whose outworking is likely to be continuing as this edition goes to press, simply underline that brutal fact.

Last but not least, however, we should remember that 'the personal is the political', and sometimes that which is most personal and practical may also be the most radical. This edition sees a further contribution from Richard Darlington on the experience of death and bereavement - all too topical for so many of our members, and a key arena for faith development, more important than any number of theological and ecclesiastical games. Other book reviews include one of the crop of books which have appeared on our Archbishop - already, I suppose, out of date in respect of someone who has made so many waves since his ▶

appointment, but reflecting how his personal experiences have shaped him - and one of some even more personal reflections by a cathedral poet-in-residence which will bring wry smiles to many. Then we have an introduction to our new Administrator who we hope will play a key part in our future life as Christine Alker has done in the past (more from Christine in a future edition), and we look forward to a day conference in memory of Marcus Borg.

And do not forget to book for this summer's Annual Conference! When the recording angel tots up influences on English spirituality over the past millennium, there is someone who has had more impact even than wave-making Archbishops or the heroes of Christian feminism, let alone the purveyors of Holy Socks in cathedral and church shops. That someone is William Shakespeare. By way of background to our theme for this year's conference, I would venture to refer back to an editorial I wrote in this newsletter in 2010 entitled *To thine own self be true* (available on the Modern Church website). That editorial reports and enlarges upon some intriguing and radical questions about Shakespeare and Scripture - and ultimately about the relationship between religion and culture - which had been raised by Rowan Williams, long-time lover and interpreter of Shakespeare and our keynote speaker this coming summer. This could be a most exciting event, so, even if you are not a Shakespeare buff, or perhaps have unhappy memories of school plays, you will be missing something if you don't come.

That underrated American process-theologian, Daniel Day Williams, was fond of asking whether we really believe that the Christian God is both Creator and Redeemer. For him, the affirmation that this was the case was a most radical statement indeed, because it meant taking the world, human culture, the 'wisdom' of creation, with ultimate seriousness alongside the Gospel and Scripture. Of course Shakespeare, that great humanist, is not the sum total of human culture, nor is his complex world-view definitive or authoritative in any exclusive way. But as a case-study of what Williams was saying, of what that other Williams (Rowan) would also argue in rather different language, and of what our conference chair Alison Milbank's beloved J R R Tolkien wrote in his famous essay *On Fairy-Stories* in a radically different way again - Shakespeare could well take us to places where Modern Church needs to engage more deeply with culture and wisdom in general. Join us on that possibly radical journey. ■

How should we address God in public worship? Part two

Jean Mayland

Where, I have to confess, I would like to see movement in describing God as we pray, it is in the area of 'motherly' images.

I once had a Maltese friend who did not pray to God because He was fierce and angry. Jesus, she felt, was not to be trusted either! So she prayed to Mary.

There are an increasing number of us who, while not wishing to do that, would be happy with some feminine, inclusive or motherly images of God.

The aforementioned *New Zealand Prayer Book* of 1989 does experiment with some more inclusive titles for God, e.g.

- Welcome in the name of God, the giver of life, Who creates and loves us all...
- God our Creator...
- God the Creator of us all...
- Creator Spirit...
- Living God...
- God whose nature is always to have mercy...
- God of the humble and hopeful...
- All embracing God...
- God in Trinity...
- Creator, Sustainer and Life Giver...
- The living God...
- Loving God (Father and Mother of us all), In the family life you have given us, you have offered yourself to us...

Sadly it dropped Jim Cotter's version of the Lord's Prayer which was included in its earlier experiential book:

**Eternal Spirit, Earthmaker, Painbearer, Lifegiver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name
echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed
by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another,
forgive us.**

**In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is
love, now and for ever.**

The book does however use part of it in a prayer for the family and home:

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer
Source of all that is and shall be
Father and Mother of us all
Loving God, in whom is heaven,
enfold this family with your grace.
May their home be a place of your presence,
your forgiveness and your freedom.
May your will be done in and through them
This day and for ever. Amen**

In 1980, General Synod published the *Alternative Service Book*. It was excellent in many respects but on inclusive language it was a failure. I had tried to raise the issue, but this was ridiculed and not accepted. One man raised the issue of the absence of such language, but did not get much support in Synod. When there was discussion in Synod on future development I raised the issue of inclusive language and others raised that of the value of the *Book of Common Prayer*. When the process of revision began I left General Synod and there was no-one to press the case. The Prayer Book Society was very powerful and had a great influence on Common Worship. The late Michael Vasey of Durham, who was on the Commission, did support having some feminine imagery for Jesus, and included a version of the prayers of St Anselm. The Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, also managed at the last minute to get included the Eucharistic Prayer containing the concept: 'As a mother tenderly gathers her children'.

In the *Franciscan Prayer Book*, a basis for Common Worship, Morning and Evening Prayer ended:

**Glory to God, Source of all being
Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
is now and shall be for ever, Amen**

But Common Worship dropped this in favour of 'Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' etc.

MOW and WATCH

Prayer became very important in the life of the Movement for the Ordination of Women. There was

an exploration of new forms of prayer, of inclusive language and of fresh symbols and images (see *A New Strength, a New Song* by Margaret Webster).

People began to write in inclusive language, and it was used ecumenically and privately, but then when women were ordained its use virtually died off in the Church of England. When I approached people like Angela Berners-Wilson about it she said they had enough to do proving themselves as good parish clergy and could not begin to introduce this. Now WATCH is raising it again, and I am delighted.

St Hilda Community

Another area in the Church of England where Inclusive language developed was the St Hilda Community inspired by Monica Furlong. She and others found the approach of MOW rather timid. Although she was always loyal and worked well in and with WATCH, she was also a member of the St Hilda Community along with a group of others including Suzanne Fageol, an American priest studying in England. They used to meet for their own worship, at first in the ecumenical chapel of Queen Mary College, but later in the adjoining Common Room. They published a book, *Women Included* (SPCK 1990), which they used. After 18 months the Bishop of London, Graham Leonard, ordered them to leave, and a Eucharist which over 100 attended was held in the car park. The Community moved across the road to Bow Road Church, which had both an Anglican and a Methodist Congregation, and met there for four years.

Other initiatives

In the early 1980's the C of E Board of Education produced study material using inclusive language which we used on the Northern Education Course. We also discussed books such as *What language shall I borrow* by Brian Wren (1989) and *Sexism and God Talk* by Rosemary Radford Reuther (SCM 1983).

At the Sheffield Conference on the Community of Women in the Church in 1982 one of the speakers, Rose Zoe-Obianga, spoke of the importance of language in worship. The British Council of Churches took this up as one of its issues and appointed a small group, which produced a report but could not find a publisher. However, others such as Jim Cotter and Janet Morley were already working in this field. Janet would have realised that the Eucharistic Prayer should always be addressed to God as Creator - not Christ. ▶

In 1990 we held the Assembly of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women in York and issued a Worship Book which contained inclusive language. The same was true of the Conference in Durham in 1998 to mark the end of the Ecumenical Decade - Churches in Solidarity with Women. The worship was received enthusiastically.

We began to use this material at ecumenical gatherings. Others were inspired to write such as Janet Wootton (Congregational) and Kate Mclhagga, Cathy Galloway of the Iona Community, Lesley Orr Macdonald and Catherine Hepburn (all members of the Church of Scotland).

In Scotland, The Women's Guild led by Ann Hepburn also commissioned a study on 'The Motherhood of God'. I was a visitor at the Guild Assembly in 1984 when this was presented and it caused a great deal of offence to many. Ann weathered the storm and the book was very well received in the USA where Ann was granted awards.

Women in Theology (WIT) was a group of theologians who lived in various places and met once a year. They used and produced anthologies of inclusive language material and feminist theology.

When I was Church Life Secretary at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, I edited a magazine resource entitled *All the Year Round*. This consisted of prayer and worship sent in individuals and chosen by a Committee which I chaired. It was published three times a year.

A group of us drawn together by CTBI also prepared a book of services, prayer and worship for the Queen's Golden Jubilee. This contained some inclusive language.

I retired in 2003 and CTBI was virtually destroyed and reduced to one staff member and a web site. Production of inclusive language worship ended. WIT closed and gradually inclusive language seemed to wither away except where kept alive by Janet Wootton and some RC and Church of Scotland women.

WATCH has recently raised the issue once more and a group is working on it. Where is Modern Church in all this? ■

What's in a name?

Lorraine Cavanagh responds to 'How should we address God in public worship? Part one' by Jean Mayland in Signs of the Times no.59, Oct 2015.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to act on Jean Mayland's invitation by responding to her article in the October issue of 'Signs'. She is understandably wary of what she perceives as a liturgical drift towards an exclusive (and excluding) Jesus worship in contemporary liturgy, although it has to be said that the churches most inclined to Jesus worship are, on the whole, non-liturgical in any formal sense.

Liturgical drift, and its incipient dangers, occurs when liturgy becomes divorced from theology. This is as true of theistic (i.e. God focused) prayers as it is of Jesus worship. In both cases we have a theological disjunction; on the one hand with the uncoupling of the persons of the Trinity and on the other with a kind of tacit monism. Both render the divinity of Christ, in the context of liturgy, opaque, ultimately giving rise to the kind of dry and formulaic liturgy ('revised' from time to time) which is 'safe', because it does not say anything significant about God. Unfortunately, it also fails to connect with many people, irrespective of their age.¹

This suggests that if liturgy is to be Christian worship in the fullest sense, it needs to be rooted in Christian meaning, and here I understand meaning to be that search for relatedness with God which we express through worship. The significance of worship, understood in this way, pertains directly to who and what we understand Jesus to be, and to what our 'understanding' consists of in an existential sense.

In this respect, I believe that praying to **Christ** works better liturgically than praying to **Jesus**, because a too heavily weighted focus on Jesus leads us into Ebionite language and hymnody which stalls our growth into spiritual maturity.² The term 'son of man' can be taken to mean 'ordinary fellow', although there are other ways of understanding his humanity within this definition. Jesus as 'the image of God' derives from the letter to the Colossians and the idea of the second Adam in Romans. Space does not permit much elaboration on this, except to say that Jean is right ▶

¹ The word 'liturgy' derives from the Greek 'leitourgos' or 'work of the people'.

² Ebionites believed that Jesus was purely human but so gifted by God that his personal charisma warranted the Messianic title.

to point out that all are made in his image. But, as one of the Eucharistic prayers points out 'we have marred that image and fall short of his glory'. The divinity of Christ, revealed in his life, suffering, death and resurrection, restores us to that glory.

To this end, Jesus, the Christ, is the 'anointed one', the one promised by the Father. Part of the salvific significance of Christ's divinity lies also in the nature of his priesthood which is specific to his person, an important factor for Jews of his time, and a central plank in the argument of the letter to the Hebrews. We could do a great deal more with this priestly concept in some of our hymns and prayers, allowing it to embrace our own priesthood as the people of God.

Christ the anointed, the promised, the Son of God is contained in the idea of the Logos and all which that word tells us about the eternal and God's ongoing creating work in the abiding Spirit of his Christ. Christ was 'in the continuous beginning', to paraphrase the Greek tense used in the beginning of John's gospel. The Son of Man is also Word made flesh. So the creating Word is life itself manifested in the earthly life of Jesus in his healing and re-creating work of forgiveness, culminating on the cross and fully revealed in his glorified risen body. Here, the term 'glorified' correlates with 'revealed'. Read together, the two words mean 'as he truly is' - fully man and fully God. Throughout his life we see people encountering in Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, Son of God, the one in whom they see and know the Father. They invariably respond by worshipping him. ■

Calling time on titles

Will Baynes

I was talking to an associate the other day about the humility of the Church of England. I had to overcome some barriers to understanding because my associate labours under certain disadvantages (I believe it is unfashionable to call them handicaps.)

First is youth; he is in his 30s. Then he only has a doctorate in something religious and obscure from Dunelm, and finally he is from Italy.

And so I began with something easy and Latinate: *interregnum* - the space or interval between the departure of a Church office holder and the arrival of a successor. Not to be explained (as some bad-

mouthers would have it) as the arbitrary expanse of time when a diocese receives a commercial rental on the parsonage house, but *the prolonged period where the passage of time allows the inadequacies of the former office holder to sink humbly into oblivion before the next appointee arrives.*

He looked at me with amazement; '*interregnum* - between kings?' he asked. 'More between rulers', I countered.

Alas, I was being invited to think.

Could it really be that in England in the 21st century we were still using imperial concepts?

More thoughts came.

The Ordinal has only three 'office and work' descriptions: bishop, priest, and deacon. Surely, since everyone is content to say 'Bishop Jones', we could abandon the honorifics: 'the Reverend', 'the Very Reverend', 'the Right Reverend', 'the Most Reverend' and say directly and simply: 'Bishop Jones', 'Priest Jones' or 'Deacon Jones', and possibly 'Archbishop Jones'? Even 'Archdeacon Jones' at a pinch, but I reflect how different the dynamics of the Church of England would be today had archdeacons been selected exclusively from the diaconate.

The continued mimicking of secular hierarchy, particularly political hierarchy, with their vacuous honorifics, calls for rejection. Let salutations proclaim content not cant.

Sending bright, questioning, young foreigners home may, however, prove easier. ■

A year of being a widower

Richard Darlington

It is now more than a year since my wife, Elizabeth Darlington, died and I would like to share how the experience has been for me.

During May and June in 2014 I was getting more and more exhausted as Elizabeth became less able to do things for herself, such as getting dressed and getting ready for bed, and my having to tend her during the day with repeated bouts of her being sick. We were also having to go to one hospital or another to get fluid drained or her nephrostomy bag tube unblocked. Elizabeth was also getting worried about how I was, ▶

as well as me about how she was - rarely in pain but a lot of awful discomfort and unable to do much because of feeling repeatedly sick.

I have since been to see her consultant about her being advised in January of 2014 to have palliative chemo treatment to reduce the likelihood of fluid building up without it being explained that an alternative was to have a permanent drain fitted to drain off the fluid, a procedure that is not done when having chemo because your immune system is compromised. The build up of fluid was one of the causes of her discomfort.

We had an expectation in the last weeks that McMillan nurses would be helping in addition to the District Nurses, but this did not materialise despite repeated calls and emails by me. So it was a great relief to both of us when Elizabeth was admitted into Dr Kershaw's Hospice on 30 June. Some people fear hospices but in my view they shouldn't. My memory of the two weeks we were there was a period of tranquility and peace and not just because responsibility was taken off my shoulders. You often hear people and their families say they want to die in their own home. I am quite sure Elizabeth had a more peaceful and happy end in the Hospice than she would at home, partly because she did not have to worry about me.

This gives me an opportunity to say how grateful I am to the hospice staff and for the stream of visitors who visited Elizabeth in the hospice, mostly from our church. Our daughter realised for the first time how strong a community we live in here.

In the year since, I have spoken to other bereaved partners and many have been shattered by their loss. I haven't, even though I miss Elizabeth and find it difficult to acknowledge I will not see her again. But I have realised how helpful it was for us to be able to discuss with each other the whole issue of dying and what happens after death, both for her and for me, and to plan the funeral together. Even then, we found it difficult to time the planning of the funeral, thinking that was way into the future when in fact Elizabeth got to a point where her ability to contribute became limited more quickly than we expected. Even so I was ready and prepared for life after her death. We had also prepared the list of contact details that would be needed in the days after her death.

It was because of my experience that I attended a half day course in February on a new Church of England

initiative to provide opportunities for people to talk about death through setting up GraveTalk Cafés (see *Church Times*, 15 May 2015 p.17, also the websites gravetalk.org and dyingmatters.org).

I quote from the Dying Matters website:

It's not easy to think about your own funeral. Talking about death, dying and funerals raises big questions that we need to face at some point, but it's hard to talk to family and friends.

The Church of England has been helping people think about these questions for centuries.

GraveTalk is a café space, organised by a local church, where people can talk about these big questions. The conversation is helped along by GraveTalk conversation cards – 52 questions covering 5 key areas.

Events have been held in locations across the country, and people of all ages have gathered to talk and share their thoughts about death, dying and funerals. GraveTalk is a café - so there is always tea and cake.

(And I hope some savouries too for people like me who control their diabetes through diet!)

I have proposed we try Death Talk Cafés here and the idea is being picked up by the Saddleworth CoE Team and Churches Together in Saddleworth.

Many friends kindly ask how I am, and I am never quite sure if they are asking how I am in relation to my loss or just health wise. 'Doing reasonably well' is the short answer to both questions, though I have had four weeks of radiotherapy for prostate cancer recently. I obviously have my moments of sadness, but mostly I am getting on with life. which includes doing what I want to do without consultation - but there is the loss of companionship, of hugs and not being able to share thoughts and experience. I can choose what food to prepare but miss sharing it, and I miss not being able to show off my paintings at the local art class and to hear Elizabeth's criticisms! I am aware I am getting older and my physical abilities are lessening, like no longer being able to clean out the house gutters.

One new activity was joining EFM (Exploring Faith Matters) last September which happens at our church on Wednesdays. My motivation was twofold, one was to continue the exploring of faith (or lack of it) that Elizabeth and I used to discuss, and the other was to get to know others at a deeper level than is usual with one's acquaintances. I recommend it. ▶



It is good to have Elizabeth's concern for Fair Trade continuing through the Traidcraft stall under the care of a younger church family. Elizabeth was also keen on doing right things for the environment, like carrying in buckets of water from the rainwater butts to flush the loo pan, and she often bemoaned the amount of professional cut flowers on graves which she saw as bad for the environment, short lasting and, being aware how we need to help fund needy causes, a misuse of money. We agreed between us that we would have potted plants, if any at all, at our graves. Her grave in consequence has had a sequence of daffodils, tulips, a geranium and winter pansies all nurtured and potted in our garden.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any of the above. Phone 0161 633 3132 or email ardee@phonecoop.coop ■

BOOK REVIEWS

Abraham's children: Jew, Christian, Muslim - Commonality and conflict & Making Sense of Militant Islam by Anne Davidson (In Brief Series: Books for Busy People, 2014)
Alan Wolfe

The three 'monotheistic' faiths collectively claim support from 3.6 billion people, 54% of the world

population, and 65% of those professing any religion. Besides all believing there is one and only one Supreme Being, all three base their faith on a book (Old Testament/Tanak, New Testament or Holy Qur'an). Anyone willing to read all three in full and in sequence will come to a number of conclusions, (even bearing in mind that they were originally written in Hebrew, Greek and Arabic and a long time ago). Basically: that all worship the same God, who was first acknowledged by the Jewish patriarch Abraham, and later confirmed by Jesus when on Earth, and then by the prophet Mohammed. Details of belief and methods of worship vary considerably in detail and importance, but have much in common - which seems to be virtually unknown among believers. For example, God gave laws, rules of conduct and other commandments which were accepted by all three religions and written in all three books. One of these is that human life is sacred, and followers of God must not kill under any circumstances. It is therefore horrifying to read that in the last two millennia thousands of Jews, Christians and Muslims have killed each other and still continue to do so today.

It has been suggested that this is partly because most nations were once theocracies, where Kings, High Priests, Popes, Caliphs and Emirs were believed to have been divinely appointed and whose wishes were therefore the will of God. Yet, even in today's democracies, individuals have taken upon themselves the right to wage war or commit terrorist acts in the name of God. The real trouble seems to lie in humankind's interpretations of Scripture. Even the Christian Church has many times had to update its beliefs and even admit to the possibility of being wrong. For instance, that God created a flat earth, or approved of slavery, racism and sexism, or that colluding with the Devil enabled humans to break the laws of nature ('witchcraft'). Islam has a tendency to pass blame for major disasters onto Al-Lah.

While at top level the three religious bodies at least consult and even issue joint declarations, they do not seem to be able to communicate well with their membership about crucial issues such as greed and violence. It therefore seems up to the laity itself to try to overcome the ignorance and prejudice that has such dire results. For a start, we all need more information in a form we can understand and communicate to others. A very good example is given by Anne Davidson who publishes a short-list of brief books on key issues for the general public. Perhaps we should all read them, and pass them round? ■

**Archbishop Justin Welby: Risk-Taker And Reconciler
by Andrew Atherstone (DLT, 2014)**

Ian Funnell

This unauthorised but well-researched biography of the marvellous Justin Welby is a re-working of an earlier version rushed out soon after his promotion to Canterbury. The author's English style is a little prosaic, and if you seek the aphorisms of Oscar Wilde or A.N. Wilson you will look in vain. However, the book is never dull, and in this Atherstone is helped, of course, by the extraordinary life of his subject.

Justin Welby was born into an affluent family, and early photos show him as effortlessly patrician. He was educated at St. Peter's Prep School in Seaford and Eton without distinguishing himself as a brilliant, or a particularly religious, student. At this time he had to cope with the break-up of his parents' marriage and his eccentric father's descent into alcoholism. He spent a gap year in Kenya, where he started to think seriously about Christianity, inspired by the faith of one of his fellow workers. Although his 'A' level results were distinctly mediocre, Justin won a place to read law at Trinity College, Cambridge (it would be churlish to point out that the Master was his great uncle, Rab Butler). At Cambridge he soon became a member of CICCUC (Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union), embracing evangelical Christianity with fervour and worshipping in the holidays at Holy Trinity, Brompton.

When he left Cambridge, Justin worked for various oil companies, soon rising through the ranks and earning a salary of £100,000 before the age of 30. However, he began to feel God was calling him to ordination, and he was ordained at the age of 36. As in his first career, he had a meteoric rise to the top, being in quick succession, rector of St James' church, Southam, a canon of Coventry cathedral working in the ministry of reconciliation, Dean of Liverpool Cathedral and Bishop of Durham.

Justin Welby has many admirable qualities, including a humility that at every stage has meant he really would have preferred not to get the next job; a courage that has seen him twice make the last 'I love you' phone call to his wife Caroline as death seemed imminent in Nigeria; and a spontaneity with the press that sometimes means he has to retract, as when he promised to compete Wonga out of business, and when he suggested that where a good vicar is in charge the congregation will inevitably grow.

Like many of the best people, Justin has broadened his outlook since his heady days in CICCUC and HTB. He

has enjoyed a protracted 'honeymoon period' with the press and still seems popular with all wings of the church; he has the potential to be a truly great Archbishop in the manner of Fisher and Ramsey – only time will tell.

**Sanctuary: Poems by Martyn Halsall
(Canterbury Press, 2014)**

Tim Pearce

Coleridge, best known for *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, also wrote a number of meditative poems which have come to be known as the Conversation poems. Martyn Halsall, a retired journalist, compiled this book of poems after a year as Poet in Residence at Carlisle Cathedral - he says,

**Like journalism, they grew from notes,
conversations, observations, reflections and
experiences, from being there.**

Some, like *Mirrors*, are mainly observations, but he readily turns what he sees into a thought to ponder. The poem is inspired by the tilting mirror in the nave which reflects and magnifies the stars decorating the Cathedral roof and allows visitors to see them without crooking and straining their necks. The poem ends:

**Ironic that we approach them at ground level.
But, come Advent, dusk, someone might stay
to watch in case a new star rises, moves.**

Sometimes, he catches a thought from a psalm in a service. 'On Unicorns' takes verse 21 of Psalm 22 in the King James version:

**Save me from the lion's mouth: thou hast heard
me also from among the horns of the unicorns
Only a fleeting canter of word in a psalm**

and meditates on the power of myth, regretting at the end:

**Only ever a footnote in the scholar's draft,
extinct after translation by the Stuarts**

In later translations the poor unicorn transmutes into a wild ox. In another poem, 'Ark', based on the animal carvings under the canon's seats in the choir, he adds the delightful idea: 'Unicorns stayed on, stowed away in a psalm' - so they never got off the Ark!

In one poem, *The Shopping of the Magi*, he turns a wry smile on the likely reaction of the wise men if ▶

they happened to turn up in the cathedral nowadays to acquire presents for the new baby from the Gift Shop:

Shopping list: probably a toddler from an ordinary sort of family, so, no, not bookmarks of the cathedrals' icon as possibly not great readers...

Even the Holy Socks had failed to entrance them, Though the ceiling's galaxy provided directions. For all the warmth of the welcome they had not come back; Something about angels, and going home a different way.

This is a collection of very readable, thoughtful and mostly undemanding poems, written with affection and admiration, which carry unexpected shafts of light into unexplored corners of cathedral life and also show how an outsider, a foreign correspondent as he as he describes himself in one poem, can be drawn into the great kaleidoscope of an historic but still vibrantly living community. ■

From our new administrator



My name is Diane Kutar and I am delighted to have been appointed as the new administrator for Modern Church.

I am married to Philip and have a six year old son, Christian. We live in Burgess Hill, about 10 miles from the South East Coast.

We worship as a family at St Andrew's Church in Burgess Hill, where I also work as their site co-ordinator. This involves running and maintaining a large Church site, including two hall spaces, where we are about to complete a £850,000 building project.

I deal with all the booking of the space by hirers and the maintenance of the site as well as writing and implementing policies, completing risk assessments,

supervising all contracts and monitoring health and safety procedures on site. In the course of the same day you may find me writing a bid for funding, or unblocking a toilet! I am also the Finance Manager for the large and popular pre-school that runs on the church site under the church's name. The role with Modern Church very much complements my other work commitments.

My background was initially in financial services, having worked for 16 years for one of the big four banks. Having reached the point where I felt I could no longer align my values with the organisation, I decided on a career change and spent the next phase of my working life as a teacher of business studies, mostly as a Head of Department. During my NQT year and second year of teaching I completed a Masters Degree in Education.

With the arrival of my son I discovered that teaching wasn't quite as family friendly as one would think! I was pleased to be able to take on two new job opportunities at my church that allowed me to work more flexibly and enjoy some family time. As my son now enters Year 1 at school I find myself ready for a new challenge and am very much looking forward to working with the Trustees and membership of Modern Church.

I have worked as a volunteer with Greenbelt for more than 15 years and for the last five years I have been a team leader, with my team running the reception desk that welcomes all artists and performers to the festival.

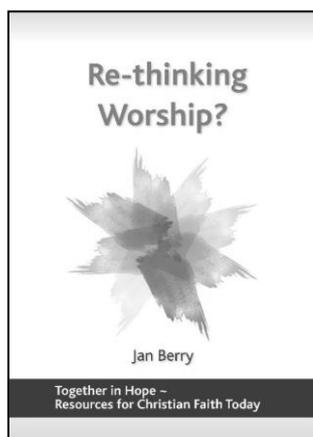
My passion and heart are for social justice. I long to be wherever God can be found, and my continual prayer is that He gives me His heart for the things that concern Him and makes His priorities mine. Working for the church is a continual lesson in how amazing God's grace is and I feel very privileged to be able to play my part.

In my spare time I am a huge Formula 1 fan, I enjoy all kinds of crafts, but especially knitting and cross stitch. We also love a good family trip to the cinema. I am passionate about reading and run my church bookstall.

Since writing this, Diane has been elected to General Synod as a representative of Chichester Diocese, and deserves our congratulations and support – Ed. ■

STOP PRESS: *Re-thinking worship* by Jan Berry

This latest title in the *Together in Hope* series has just been published. The foreword reads:



For many who seek a credible Christian faith in this twenty-first century, participation in public worship can raise challenging questions about the nature of God, the use of language and the very practice and purpose of such acts of worship.

Much has been written about prayer and liturgy over the centuries and

numerous resources are available... yet the difficult issues about language and meaning remain an obstacle for many who might wish to be part of a worshipping community.

In this booklet, Jan Berry addresses these issues in a gentle yet comprehensive rethink about Christian worship.

An event to introduce the booklet is being organised by Jan Berry at Luther King House in Manchester on Monday evening, 25 January. More information about this is available on the Modern Church website or ring Christine (who is still working with the Joint Publications Project) on 0114 2746266 for a copy: £4.50 including postage. ■

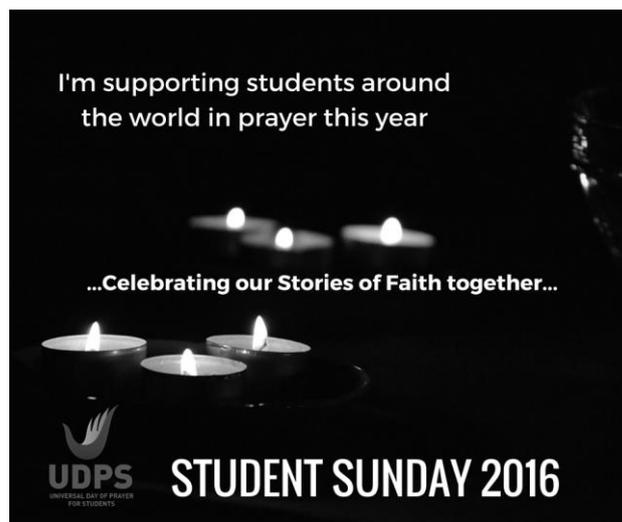
Student Sunday – 21st February 2016

Our partners the Student Christian Movement have been in touch about this annual event which you may be interested in and able to promote. The SCM website includes free resources to download and use to mark Student Sunday.

What is Student Sunday?

Student Sunday happens every year on the third Sunday of February. It is organised by the World Student Christian Federation and known worldwide as the Universal Day of Prayer for Students (UDPS).

Join individuals and churches from around the world to mark Student Sunday 2016 and show your support



for the thousands of students globally who are living out their faith and working for peace and justice.

The Student Christian Movement (SCM) in Britain is partnering with the World Student Christian Federation to create a resource pack that will enable churches and student groups to celebrate Student Sunday. The theme in 2016 is 'Stories of Faith', reflecting the diversity of faith stories from students around the world. From Europe and the Middle East to Latin America and Asia, find out how you can be praying for students as they face different challenges.

This year's pack contains resources to help you plan a service and include different activities in your specific setting – including prayer ideas for small groups, sermon notes, all-age activities, worship and liturgy materials, and reflections from students. You can order the toolkit for free today – visit:

movement.org.uk/resources/student-sunday-2016
Click on the 'Send me UDPS resources' button, complete the order form and you'll be sent a link to download the pack. ■

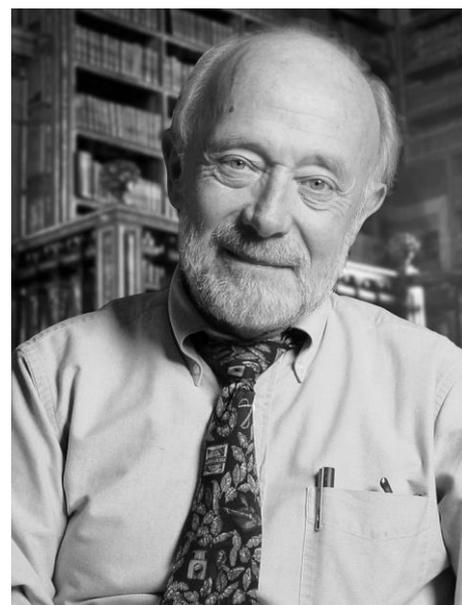
STOP PRESS... STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...

As we go to press, Rev Professor Martyn Percy, one of our Vice Presidents, is writing a significant article in advance of January's global gathering of Primates to discuss Anglican disagreements about sexuality. By the time you receive this issue of *Signs of the Times*, Martyn's article will be available to read on the Modern Church website. Please take time to look at it.



**Diana Butler Bass –
Grounded:
Finding God
in the world - a
spiritual revolution**

Saturday 14th May 2016
at Carrs Lane Church,
Birmingham
10.30am – 4.00pm



**A day conference in honour of the late Marcus Borg
jointly organised by four leading Christian organisations:
Modern Church, PCN Britain, St Marks CRC and Free to Believe.**

Marcus Borg described Diana Butler Bass as:
'one of our foremost commentators on twenty first century Christianity'.

Bass's clearly worded, powerful, and probing book, *Christianity After Religion*,
is required reading for anyone interested in the future of Christianity.

We welcome Diana whose new book *Grounded* explores how people are finding
new spiritual ground by discovering and embracing God everywhere in the world around us
- in the soil, the water, the sky, in our homes and neighbourhoods, and in the global commons.

Faith is no longer a matter of mountaintop experience or institutional practice;
instead, people are connecting with God through the environment in which we live.

Diana describes herself as a Christian 'who attempts to live the generative, inviting, inclusive,
and transforming practices at the heart of Christianity that can heal the world'.

Her book *Christianity without Religion* is a truly inspiring piece of writing,
very much in the footsteps of Borg.

A day not to be missed! A day to honour Marcus Borg, to meet with like-minded searchers
and to take forward the transformation in how people understand and experience God,
away from the conventions of traditional religion.

**Book online at modernchurch.org.uk (follow the link on the home page)
or phone 0845 345 1909 for a booking form.**