

Issue 54 June 2017

£2.50

### In this issue

Michael Perham	1
Music News	2
Events	2
Books	3-4
Reports	4-6
Funeral Ministry	7
Yorkshire Liturgists' Network	7
Whole Life Worship	8
Colin's Column	8

### What is Praxis?

See [www.praxisworship.org.uk](http://www.praxisworship.org.uk)  
Praxis was formed in 1990, sponsored by the Liturgical Commission, the Group for the Renewal of Worship (GROW) and the Alcuin Club to provide and support liturgical education in the Church of England.

*Praxis News of Worship* is copyright © Praxis 2017. Material for inclusion should be sent to the editor, [gill.ambrose@happyserver.co.uk](mailto:gill.ambrose@happyserver.co.uk)  
We reserve the right to edit material and make no guarantee to include material submitted. The views expressed are not necessarily those of Praxis or the Praxis Council.

Contact [praxis@praxisworship.org.uk](mailto:praxis@praxisworship.org.uk)

For general enquiries, affiliation and programme information, contact Praxis, 19 The Close, Salisbury, SP1 2EB, 01202 296886, [praxis@praxisworship.org.uk](mailto:praxis@praxisworship.org.uk)

### Affiliation

The work that Praxis does is supported mainly by affiliation. If you are not an affiliate, why not consider becoming one?

# Michael Perham

1947-2017

A Personal Reflection by Paul Bradshaw

Very many years ago Michael Perham, Bryan Spinks, Kenneth Stevenson and I used to meet frequently at liturgical conferences and other meetings, with Kenneth giving each of us nicknames taken from *Winnie the Pooh*. It has been therefore very sobering to witness the early death of the two episcopal members of our number. Alongside the rich contributions that he made to the Church of England as parish priest, canon, dean, and bishop, Michael can rightly be described as having been its outstanding pastoral liturgist of his generation. While still an ordinand at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, he was already preparing what became the first of the Alcuin Club's series of manuals, *The Eucharist*, published in 1978, which was so successful that it ran to a second edition in 1981. Many other books followed, among them *Liturgy Pastoral and Parochial* (1984), *Lively Sacrifice* (1992), and *A New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy* (2000), all of which, along with the many talks that he gave, have helped raise the quality of worship that congregations experience.

Michael joined the Church of England Liturgical Commission in 1982, where in participating in the process resulting in the production of *Lent, Holy Week, Easter* (1996), it soon became apparent that he possessed the gift of enormous patience, something that was to be a hallmark of his later ministry. In the years that followed he continued to make major contributions



to the work of the Commission leading up to the publication of *Common Worship*, as well as being one of the founding members of Praxis. In particular, he played a significant part in producing the volume *The Promise of His Glory* (1991), including the commentary on it written with Kenneth Stevenson, and he edited its successor, *Enriching the Christian Year* (1993). In view of all these varied liturgical activities, it was fitting that he was made President of the Alcuin Club in 2005, but sad that he did not live long enough to continue it far into his retirement as he had planned.

✠ Paul Bradshaw is a Consultant to the Liturgical Commission and was Professor of Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame in the United States.

## Hymn Society lecture

In 2006, Archbishop Rowan Williams gave a lecture to the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, entitled 'What are we saying by singing?' He spoke of how 'the building up of human expression, human communication and human solidarity does not depend just on exchanging ideas in the form of words.' He discussed various ways in which singing can function, and insisted that 'hymns are not an afterthought', something purely decorative. Singing could even be considered a sacrament.

The lecture is now available to read on (or download from) the Hymn Society's website. From the home page (<https://hymnsocietygbi.org.uk>) choose '80 Treasures' and scroll down to the bar labelled '2005-2014'. The relevant lecture is Treasure No. 72.

## Bach and Resurrection

Sarum College, near Salisbury Cathedral, is hosting a study day which aims to explore J. S. Bach's understanding of Christ's resurrection through his choral and liturgical music. Led by Charles Stewart, an ordained priest and experienced singer who has studied Bach's music in some depth and conducted performances, the study day will be held on Wednesday 14 June, from 10 am to 4 pm, and there is no charge for attending.

For further details and to book a place, see the Sarum College website ([www.sarum.ac.uk](http://www.sarum.ac.uk)), e-mail [courses@sarum.ac.uk](mailto:courses@sarum.ac.uk) or phone 01722 424800.

## Reformation 500

The influence of the Reformation in England will be explored at a 'Gathering' in Sheffield Cathedral from Friday 13 to Sunday 15 October 2017, a mainly musical and educational meeting organised by the Friends of Cathedral Music. Further information, including options for accommodation, can be found on their website (<https://fcm.org.uk/events>).

On the other side of the Atlantic, a hymn festival marking Reformation 500 is to be held in Carnegie Hall, New York, on Sunday 25 June at 2 pm. Two choirs making up 500 voices have been recruited by Concordia College, and the music will include a hymn commissioned especially for the occasion. 'Praise the one who knit us, bone and marrow' is by Jill Baumgaertner

(b.1948), set to music by Carl Schalk (b.1929).

## Singing retreat

A week providing teaching in voice technique using songs that give 'inspiration, hope and orientation on life's journey' is being held at Minsteracres Retreat Centre, Consett, DH8 9RT from 11 am on 10 July to 2 pm on 16 July 2017. 'Songs for the Journey' will also include 'reflections for our pilgrim journey' with visits to places connected with Northern Saints, and travellers of times past.

This singing retreat will be led by Monique van den Hoogen from Utrecht, who has conducted choirs both sacred and secular for over thirty years and has made a number of visits to Minsteracres to lead workshops. She is said to deliver 'readily accessible voice training with joy, humour and patience.'

For details of the costs and how to book (as a resident, non-resident or day visitor), see the Minsteracres website ([www.minsteracres.org](http://www.minsteracres.org)). Minsteracres Retreat Centre is a Christian place of prayer with a resident community rooted in the Roman Catholic Passionist tradition.

## Musical resources

Among the resources listed for Pentecost and Trinity Sunday on the Jubilate website ([www.jubilate.co.uk/collections/pentecost](http://www.jubilate.co.uk/collections/pentecost)) is a new hymn of penitence based on the fruit of the Spirit and written by Martin Leckebusch. 'Spirit of God, you know my inmost being' is set to the tune O PERFECT LOVE, written by Victorian composer Joseph Barnby and usually associated with the wedding hymn 'O perfect love, all human thought transcending' (the tune can be heard through online, played on the piano). The metre is 11 10 11 10 and there is surely scope for a newer musical setting of Martin's text.

Also listed is a song by Matt Osgood on the Trinity, found on the RESOUNDWorship website ([www.resoundworship.org](http://www.resoundworship.org)), 'We give glory and praise to the Father (Awesome Trinity)'. Those who wish to use the song can download lyrics, chord sheet and lead sheet at no charge (entering the song on their CCLI copyright return), but for a small payment it is also possible to download an mp3 file, a backing track, a piano score and a choir score. The song can be heard online.

## Yorkshire Liturgists' Network

**Tuesday 12 September 12 noon – 2 pm**  
**Leeds Diocesan Office, 17-19 York Place, Leeds, LS1 2EX. Bring your own lunch.**

For more details of the Network, see page 7 column 3 in this issue.

Contact [johnfrancismoss@btinternet.com](mailto:johnfrancismoss@btinternet.com)

## We shape our worship, our worship shapes us

**Wednesday 13 September**

**10.30-4.00**

**St Aloysius Parish Centre, Euston, NW1 1TA**

Joint Liturgical Group of Great Britain  
Speakers: Graham Maule (Shaped by Art), Andrew Carwood (Shaped by Music), Geraldine Latty and Carey Luce (Shaped by Sound and Story)

Contact [Martin.Foster@cbcew.org.uk](mailto:Martin.Foster@cbcew.org.uk)

Full information at [www.jlg.org.uk/events](http://www.jlg.org.uk/events)

## Strengthen for Service: Manage and maintain your music: a course for Anglican clergy, Readers and lay leaders

**Tuesday 19 - Thursday 21 September**  
**Aylesford Priory, Kent, ME20 7BX**

Led by the RSCM's Head of Ministerial Training, Helen Bent.

*Strengthen for Service* provides practical guidance on how to manage your parish music.

Cost: Full board: £280; Early bird: £265 (until Friday 23 June); Non-residential (includes lunch and dinner): £196

Contact [www.rscm.com/courses](http://www.rscm.com/courses) by Friday 31 July

## Bless your enemies; pray for those who persecute you:

### Worship to mend and reconcile

**Wednesday 1 November 10.30 -3.30**

**St Luke's, Sydney Street, Chelsea, London SW3 6NH**

**Praxis South**

Speakers: Bishop Christopher Cocksworth and Bishop Brian Castle

Easy to say; difficult to do. This day will explore how we can overcome this problem in our worship.

Contact [peter@furber.me.uk](mailto:peter@furber.me.uk)

## ***On the Way to the Holy Mountain***

– *landscape, space and liturgy*, Arne E. Sæther, SÆTHERS FORLAG, 2012

This extraordinary book – an A4-sized hardback – is the work of an enthusiastic Norwegian architect, whose passion it is that we should understand the spaces – whether interior constructs like churches, or natural or contrived landscapes – that put us in touch with and express our essential human quest for growth and enlightenment. I thought from its title that it was going to be a book about a journey of self-discovery based on a pilgrimage to The Holy Mountain, the monastic peninsular of Mont Athos in Northern Greece. But it is something altogether else.

Starting from semi-sociological reflections on space and landscape as important determinants of how we conceive the holy, the book develops into a series of reflections on how our celebrations of Christian worship take colour from and are constrained by their architectural setting – or even more mundanely by the way churches are furnished. At the end of the book it emerges that his passion is driven by the opportunities he has had as an architect both in his own and other churches to resurrect, reshape and remake settings for the liturgy that will both express and form the identity of a worshipping community in a way that is theologically coherent, liturgically informed and steps beyond the merely functional.

He pursues his vision with energy. The result is a passionate, rambling and disorganized book – self-published, and in desperate need of an editor. It would not even have taken an editor to check some of the mis-spellings that run through the book: I rather like leymen, but crucifix and Orthodox ought to be standard English words that any proof-reader could spot. It is profusely illustrated – many pages have a dozen images or more, arranged as collages, insets and slideshows; and the quality varies from the elegant, through the snapshot to the hyper-pixelated newsprint image.

But the key problem is that his thesis is not developed according to any very obvious plan, so having already (pp.60-63) rehearsed the questions of longitudinal versus circular form, we move via a reflection on shopping malls and football stadia as the places for modern secular liturgies (pp.102-5) to reflections on orientation, the axes of Revelation, then to seeing the landscape as a kind of ‘world tent’ in which the

Christmas Tree finds a place and provides the opportunity for him to paste the music of his own Christmas carol.

There are many instructive gems and insights in this welter of information and opinion – not always easily distinguishable. Theologically, Sæther is interested in exploring how far the altar is a place of sacrifice, or a tomb, or is it really a communion table? (p.145ff), and we learn quite late on (p.178) that the Church of Norway has now decided (in 2009) that the presiding officiant shall face the congregation. Pages of alternative ways of laying out positions for the altar/table (pp.154-184) precede and follow this, with large numbers of illustrations, but little help in thinking through the liturgical implications of the new rites and their implicit theology. The same is true of the section on fonts and baptism, where you would never think that anyone except infants was baptized in church! Maybe they aren't in Norway, but neither are we told what theologies of baptism the new rites in Norway embrace, so English and Anglican readers will be left puzzled.

It is a pity that there is no discernible theological thread through the book, so inevitably it ends up with a series of historical examples – Sæther has clearly travelled in Georgia and Armenia as well as to Italy, France and England – of past practice, good and bad, and no clear way of helping a congregation to make informed choice when it comes to re-ordering or rebuilding a church now. Sæther has comments on lighting, on how to avoid silhouetting a preacher or officiant against a window, on how to group moveable seating around liturgical foci, and then change that; and some comments on the importance of singing in building community. There are useful hints and *recherché* bits of antiquarian and liturgical information from time to time, but I would have expected the section on screens and divisions that is on pp.230-240 to have been linked with the section on planning sequences of spaces in pp.141-4: instead it is a prelude to the section on altar rails and how to receive the sacrament, and then pews.

So will it be useful in England? I very much doubt it. There is no advance liturgically on Richard Giles' *Re-Pitching the Tent* on how to re-order churches, or pragmatically on Nigel Walter and Andrew Mottram's manual *Buildings for Mission*. Those who want a more serendipitous approach may learn some useful bits of

history, or have their lateral thinking extended by the essentially Scandinavian insights into placing buildings and the experience they offer in natural settings. But I cannot think that readers of *Praxis News of Worship* would find anything much beyond confusion and irritation.

✉ David Stancliffe was formerly Bishop of Salisbury, Chair of the Liturgical Commission 1993-2005 and author of *The Lion Companion to Church Architecture*.

## ***Ancient Christian Worship***

*Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective*, Andrew B McGowan, Baker Academic, reprinted 2016

This is a welcome and comprehensive volume, based on scholarly research and very accessible to a wide audience. When we talk of early Christian worship, we can easily become trapped into an idealistic mind-set, longing to take the Church back to its roots and thereby creating a more authentic representation of a Christian community, in some way to bring us closer to Christ. McGowan subliminally challenges this. He is in no way idealistic about early Christian worship, ritual and devotion. He strips the word ‘worship’ of its contemporary meaning in order to help us fully understand what worship actually signified for the first Christian disciples. He tackles this subject in his Introduction and carefully explains how the concept of worship has been lost in translation throughout the centuries. For the earliest Christians, McGowan argues, worship was ‘not primarily concerned with the conduct of Christian assemblies or communal rituals.’ Instead, we learn, worship referred more to ‘reverence and obedience or with bodily performances that enacted them...’ (p.6).

Chapter by chapter, McGowan examines the traditional areas of Christian worship, in a chronological fashion, taking the reader up to about the year 400CE. He begins with the concepts of Banquet and Eucharist, including a fascinating examination of the place of the ‘kiss’ within Christian ritual. We are led through an examination of Christian reading and preaching, including a snapshot glimpse of the earliest Christian sermons.

One chapter is devoted, quite rightly, to early Christian music and dancing, in the context of a Christian gathering, including how ‘dinner music’ became liturgical music. We are then given a very

systematic examination of the Initiation rites, including foot-washing and anointing as well as the origins and development of baptism. A chapter on the hours and forms of daily prayer and another on fasts and feasts in the liturgical year conclude this extensive tour of the first four centuries of complex and varied Christian worship.

Regularly, early Christian texts are quoted and examined which helps ground McGowan's arguments in important source material. Throughout the volume, there are helpful subheadings and chapters are sparsely divided into sections, which guide the reader through the topics in a gentle and elegant fashion.

Anyone who is interested in a genuinely well-researched and balanced perspective on early Christian worship should have this on the bookshelf: a welcome volume and highly commended.

✦ *Christopher Woods is Vicar of St Anne's, Hoxton and Adult Education Officer for Stepney Episcopal Area.*

## **A Functional Art: Reflections of a Hymn Writer**

*Timothy Dudley-Smith, OUP, 2017*

This book is a treasure trove. Few other people can set a lifetime of appreciating and, eventually, writing good hymns alongside wide-ranging insights about worship, history, theology, poetry and language, all topped off with appropriate dollops of music hall and doggerel that slip seamlessly into the narrative. This vast repertoire of sources is marshalled into ten chapters starting with 'Why hymns' and 'Why new hymns?', through 'Good and not so good' (the latter discussed very graciously) to chapters on the practicalities of writing in this very specific art form, ending with a look towards the future.

The book is autobiographical, grounding everything in 90 years of Christian discipleship. After an opening 'Something about myself', the book is littered with personal stories, reflections and hymns which enrich the discussion. The book is also biographical and historical, so well-known and lesser-known hymn writers populate the pages alongside song writers from W.S. Gilbert to Stephen Sondheim. In the index, the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion rub shoulders with Hallam, Tennyson and Dylan Thomas, while common metre sits between comic verse and *Common Worship*. That breadth of sources could, in less skilled hands, result

in an unfocused ramble to an uncertain destination; instead the book is an enjoyable and educational guided walk with a most engaging expert who wears his learning lightly. Although published as an academic book, OUP's small typeface and dense layout should not put other people off; beginning hymn writers will find invaluable help and encouragement to hone their skills and spare the Church the trite and banal, there are insights for people who choose hymns in worship but have never wondered what makes a good hymn in an appropriate place, while people who know their way round hymns will find new perspectives. And, at times, it does not just inspire you, it makes you smile.

✦ *Rosalind Brown is Canon Librarian of Durham Cathedral.*

## **The Liturgical Ministry of a Reader**

*Phillip Tovey Grove Worship W230 2013*

Current regulations governing Reader ministry are cast in rather a negative tone, and seem concerned with keeping the law. But when read carefully, they actually outline some exciting possibilities. This fascinating study by the Principal of the Oxford Diocese Local Ministry Scheme explores the whole range of options for Readers, seeing their potential as 'complementary ministers'. The result is an exciting and broad-ranging vision for this important ministry in the Church of England.

## **Eastward or Westward?**

*Alcuin/GROW Joint Liturgical Study 83 Neil O'Donoghue, Hymns A & M, May 2017*

Anglicans have for 30, 40 or 50 years regularly taken 'westward position' to preside at communion – that is, they have faced the congregation from behind the communion table. The change has been largely matched in the Church of Rome (though it is worth noting that for Anglicans the change from eastward to westward was already well started before Vatican II and is not to be attributed to Rome-watching). Here, however, is a learned Irish Roman Catholic wrestling with forces of history and the thrust of eucharistic theology to explore the values and emphases of both positions and their relative strength, largely as expressed within his own tradition, but also with reference to others.

## **Annual Day for Diocesan Liturgical Committees**

This year's day for Diocesan Liturgical Committee members, on 6 April, gathered an audience of 40 people around the subject of 'Accessible Worship for Those Living with Dementia'. The programme began with a keynote presentation by James Woodward, the Principal of Sarum College. Canon Woodward's research and writing on ageing and dementia command a wide audience, and under his guidance, the Centre for Human Flourishing at Sarum College is making available valuable resources and teaching in this area ([www.sarum.ac.uk/learning/the-arts/resources-library/dementia-resources](http://www.sarum.ac.uk/learning/the-arts/resources-library/dementia-resources)).

The presentation asked the question, 'What is the Gospel for a Society in fear of Dementia?' It demands a thorough and thoughtful response, beginning with attention to memory. Canon Woodward drew on the Ignatian duality of the outer journey and the inner spiritual life in the making of the whole person. He noted research that shows spiritual liveliness and curiosity increasing after the age of 55, a phenomenon not yet taken into account in the predominant paradigm of old age, which follows a course of decline, diminution and death.

Next came community. The Church is a community of belonging, in which the strong need the weak as much as the weak need the strong (much could be learned from the work of Jean Vanier). It has no business endorsing the prevailing adulation of physical and cognitive perfection, productivity, role and status. Its use of liturgy and scripture should protest against these tendencies, rather than colluding with them – intentionally or unintentionally.

How does this way of seeing the Church affect its treatment of people with dementia? Most importantly, it honours the existence of the 'enduring self', even when the capacity for rational and moral action has diminished. Sources for understanding and honouring the enduring human person are to be found in the Wisdom tradition in scripture and theology. In studying them as preparation for considering the preparation of 'resources', rather than as additions to resource packs, the Church has an opportunity to discover what Canon Woodward called 'a more sophisticated and tentative relationship with words and

power’.

Yet practical challenges remain. We have little insight into what might be happening when a person with dementia is ‘praying without understanding’, nor do we know how God is acting in this process. John Swinton’s *Dementia: Living in the memories of God* (SCM 2015) is a valuable enquiry into what still being loved by God might tell us about God and faith. The Church must find a way to minister to people with dementia and their carers, knowing at the same time that society is deeply afraid of dementia. It must examine the purpose of liturgy and worship when the relationship between words and cognition is altered.

Canon Woodward addressed the urgent demand for help and guidance in offering ministry, particularly encouraging a service designed for older people as a regular part of the Church’s pattern of worship; a service in celebration of age; and ways to provide opportunities for worship and regular contact for those who can no longer regularly come to church. He prefaced this with some important advice on presentation (attention to styles of leadership, repetition and appeal to memories, and key themes) in order to draw out a ‘faith-filled response’ and to give access to a sense of presence and mystery. Worshipers – *all* worshippers – should be able to be confident in bringing all aspects of their lives to God, both in thanksgiving and praise, and in the hope of comfort and healing.

A panel discussion followed the presentation and gave an opportunity for a number of questions to be raised. Many of these related to conventional notions of competence and what the Church can do to engage people in the absence of obvious competence. In responding, Canon Woodward reminded the audience that all of these questions are framed in what has become ‘the persistent moral question for the twenty-first century’: ‘What are older people for?’ He urged the importance of thinking eschatologically about ministry to those with dementia. Its greatest purpose is to be a channel of ‘grace for salvation’, and this should be the vision that guides all planning and offering of worship and ministry.

During the second half of the programme, Julia Burton-Jones (Dementia Specialist Project Officer for the Diocese of Rochester) and David Richardson (Dementia Co-ordinator for Churches Together in Cumbria) led an act of worship modelling elements which they had

found accessible to people with dementia. Following that, the group divided into two workshops led by Julia and David. This was an opportunity to learn about their work, to share local experience and expertise, and to ask practical questions. A final plenary session brought together reflections from the workshops and a valuable closing suggestion that ‘resonance’ might be a fruitful organising metaphor in considering how memory and familiarity might be touched at a very deep level, in the absence of cognitive ability.

Sue Moore and Matthew Salisbury are to be congratulated on arranging and hosting such an invigorating and timely event.

✉ *Bridget Nichols takes up a post as Lecturer in Anglicanism and Liturgy at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute in July.*

## Liturgical Commission

The Liturgical Commission met on 3rd and 4th May in Hitchin. Following up work done by some Commission members and the Messy Church Team, advice on the way in which Holy Communion may be celebrated in Messy Churches was considered. Further work will follow and it is hoped that support and training will result from this in due course.

Following the approval of Additional Baptism Texts in Accessible Language, consideration was given to an appropriate way to re-publish the *Common Worship* Initiation texts in the most helpful way possible. Recognising that the current ‘blue book’ is rather complex and difficult to access, plans were made to offer a slimmer version of the compilation of these texts together with some supplementary more or less ready-to-use services. Further work should see this development realised fairly quickly.

Members heard how the Church of Sweden’s *Bönboken*, a personal prayer book, has enjoyed huge sales. The book offers prayers for a lifetime, linking the natural world and secular life-time celebrations with the liturgical year. Consideration is being given as to whether something similar might be useful in the English context.

Texts to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War were received, and ways to support worship with dementia sufferers were discussed. Commission members were delighted to hear from Adrian Harris, the Church of England’s Head of Digital Communications, who explained how the

website will be overhauled, making the search for liturgical texts much easier, and how social media can be used to make resources more readily and rapidly available.

✉ *Gill Ambrose is a consultant to the Liturgical Commission.*

## Worshipping Where People Are: How do we transform lives?

Over 100 people gathered in Southwark Cathedral for a Praxis South event which explored how to create worship and liturgy that is engaging for all people.

Steve Summers began by presenting an insightful reflection arguing that the Eucharist is a shared meal with friends. Therefore, as we celebrate this meal together, we enter into ‘a socially significant event’, as well as the ‘ritualised and liturgically rich, ecclesial event that we are so familiar with.’ Steve developed his argument by considering the nature of friendship between Jesus and the disciples as described in John 15.12-17 and the importance of friendship and hospitality in the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament. In turn, this led us to consider what it means to be friends of Christ today and how this affects mission and our worshipping experience. The corresponding workshop in the afternoon provided a more interactive setting to discuss and explore these ideas further. We discussed questions such as, ‘What do those outside the worshipping community expect from attending church in the way of friendship?’ ‘What changes would we need to make both to our patterns and structures of worship if we were to take a friendship model more seriously?’ ‘How can we make our Eucharistic worship more “friend” orientated?’ These questions provided us with an excellent tool to help us analyse our own practice and to question our presuppositions about worship and friendship. We also learnt from each other, picking up ideas for all-age Communion services and how to engage with friendship networks and social media.

The second presentation, by John Leach, focused on exploring how worship is more than what we say or sing. He argued that worship is still characterised by the values of the Reformation and Enlightenment where worship has been reduced essentially to a mental activity with emphasis on words, text and rubrics. The world has moved on though. In the afternoon, he provided us

with excellent guidelines to help us create engaging, multisensory worship beyond words. His suggestions included how we might create the backdrop to worship by focusing on the atmosphere as people come into church: What do people see, hear, feel, smell, taste when they come into church? He then took one aspect of a service, an act of penitence, and helped us to work through what Scripture has to say about penitence and then how we might express this 'beyond words' in worship. I particularly liked his notion of first 'think big – go mad' before then scaling back; this way we were encouraged to move out of our comfort zone and to be a little more radical than usual. So, for example, an act of penitence might involve 'cleansing', which could be expressed largely by turning a hosepipe on the congregation! In practice, this would scale down to perhaps gently flicking water over each other or hand washing. He concluded his workshop with a suggestion of how we might reflect on our experience and any changes we make. His format was short, easy-to-remember and could easily be applied in a short meeting or 'wash-up' after a service.

In conclusion, the whole day was both thought-provoking and practical; there was a real sense of excitement and anticipation in the group I went with as we headed home full of ideas and ready to consider what it means to be a friend of Christ in our setting, and how we can 'worship without words'.

✉ *Anne Mitchell is a non-stipendiary minister at St Michael's, Camberley.*

## What are churches for? The challenge of church buildings today

What is to be done with all our church buildings? With smaller congregations, dwindling communities and mounting costs the challenge grows ever greater.

Following the recent publication of the Church Buildings Review and the Festival Churches proposal, the Alcuin Club AGM on 18 May hosted a discussion on this issue with presentations by Professor Robin Gill, Emeritus Professor of Applied Theology at the University of Kent and author of *The Myth of the Empty Church*, and by Bishop John Inge, Bishop of Worcester and the lead bishop for Church-Care.

Robin Gill began with a summary history of church decline in this country: that it is not (as often believed) bound up with modernity but has been a phenomenon going back to the mid-nineteenth century. The 1851 church census seems to have captured the high point of Anglican churchgoing; for the Free Churches their highest attendance was in the 1880s and for the Roman Catholics, the 1960s. Depopulation would exacerbate the problem, notably in rural areas but also, for example, in the City of London from the eighteenth century. However, while church attendance was shrinking, church building continued to expand through the nineteenth century. Anglican and Free Church building reflected different types of engagement: the Church of England church was often sponsored by a wealthy patron; while the chapel was funded and built by its community, often at very great personal cost.

Robin Gill mentioned some current trends. Closing churches increases decline: of the remaining congregation perhaps half join other churches, the rest cease to attend. Cathedrals and 'mega-churches' are well-attended but undermine neighbouring churches. And the age profile of congregations and of clergy is increasing, even in those congregations which have apparently young attenders. Many of these are students. There are very few children, and this causes great concern for the future.

Bishop John Inge reflected on the findings of the Church Buildings Review. In terms of 'what are churches for?' he believed the answer was that they are a witness – like the earliest churches which were martyria, shrines of martyrs or witnesses to Christ. A church bears witness to a world open to God, not closed in on itself. And if churches are there to witness, they must reflect the two great commandments: service to God and service to our neighbour. The church has to find its place at the service of the community.

Financially the Church of England is one of the least-established churches in Western Europe, with very little funding from government for the support of its historic buildings. It is local community support that is evidenced in the care seen in our churches, different from many somewhat soulless state-supported buildings in France. The local community is therefore the key as both the *raison d'être* and the support of the church building. Although this is not going

to be possible in parts of Lincolnshire and Devon, for example, where communities have disappeared, for many it is important to see the role of the building as a challenge, not as a burden. 'Beeching closures' are not an option. That would simply witness to the idea that the Church has disappeared.

Many contributed to the conversation after the main speakers. Tim Barker reported on discussions about 'festival churches', the idea that those serving small communities might have services only on major feasts. However, clergy are already overloaded with commitments at Christmas and Easter and it was hard to see that such an approach would be practicable. There does not seem to be one blueprint imposed from on high; rather everything depends on local circumstances, and already many of these churches have only occasional services according to need and resources.

There was considerable discussion around the 'mix' of religious and community vision. On the one hand there is a concern about preserving the sense of liminality or transcendence - in a community building it is essential to preserve the sense of God and the centrality of worship – on the other, the gap between the 'Reithian high culture' predominant in churches and popular culture. Moreover, the massive cost of maintaining church buildings is leading even some flourishing congregations to abandon their traditional home in favour of a modern practical building.

This is a problem that manifests itself in countless different ways, and local circumstance will determine outcomes more than central initiative. Essential will be permission from the centre (and from heritage lobbies!) and a real vision and commitment in local congregations and communities. The challenge will grow in the years to come but it will be a challenge, hopefully, rather than a burden.

The Alcuin AGM also included a tribute to Bishop Michael Perham, its President, who died at Easter. Bishop Stephen Platten, former Chair of the Church of England Liturgical Commission and Chair of the publishers Hymns A&M, has agreed to be the new President of the Club. Bishop Stephen has said it is a particular honour to succeed Michael Perham.

✉ *Gordon Jeanes is Vicar of St Anne's Wandswoth.*

# Funeral Ministry

## Why use a Confession in a Funeral Service?

Few clergy I know use routinely use a prayer of confession at a funeral service. It seems an awkward moment as people gather for what they want to think of as a 'Celebration' or at the very least 'Thanksgiving for the Life of' to introduce something in people's minds which implies guilt or blame. Some use a confession if it is a Requiem – so that it fits the shape of a communion service – but otherwise it is avoided.

However, in my twenty years of taking funerals as a Church of England priest, I have come to see it as increasingly vital for two main reasons.

First, guilt is a normal feeling within grief. However much families want to insist that the funeral must not be miserable, grief cannot be avoided and it will be felt at a funeral. The Church does no one any favours when it simply colludes with the modern notion of avoiding anything within the service which might make people sad. Along with that, family members will at times feel guilt at what they did or didn't say to their loved ones, things they failed to do; or indeed ways in which they felt that their family member failed them.

Second, eulogies are now standard at funerals. It is rare to listen to one where any weakness in the person who has died is even acknowledged. I am often left feeling that either here was a paragon of great virtue or only a partial picture is being presented. I know which is more likely! As a parishioner of mine wryly noted in his written instructions on his funeral before he died, 'Don't be afraid to say bad things, otherwise people may think they have come to the wrong funeral!' When funerals speak only praise of a person, I worry for family members in particular who will always have more mixed memories of the person who has died and be feeling the added guilt of worrying that these are wrong feelings which should be suppressed.

A colleague who always uses a confession at a funeral said to me that he didn't always know why he did it – but he generally found that there was someone in the congregation who did. Wise words.

So now, before we listen to eulogies extolling the virtues of the deceased and we are reminded how wonderful he or she was, I lead the congregation in a simple prayer in which we offer our more mixed memories to God. I keep it fairly simple, tending to use the prayer offered in the Scottish Episcopal Church rite rather than inviting the congregation to join in with me. Having acknowledged that there were times when the deceased drove us mad, I find it easier then

to listen to what a marvellous person they were really.

✉ *Jeremy Brooks is Rector of Beaconsfield and author of Heaven's Morning Breaks: Sensitive and practical reflections on funeral practice.*

## The stress of funeral ministry

'Please can we have a moratorium on dying.' That was the heartfelt plea posted by a member of the Sheldon Hub, 'It feels like jolly nearly everyone has cancer or something else very serious and a disturbing number are dying ... the sheer accumulation of suffering, grief and trauma is beginning to get to me. I begin to dread the signs of another person wanting to pull me aside and have a quiet word (thought bubble - oh no, another trauma) and I observe the signs of stress building within me ...'

The topic struck a chord with other members – the Hub provides a safe place to share these sort of feelings in ministry, and to pray for each other at tough times.

When we attend the funeral of a loved one we know to what extent the ceremony succeeds in meeting our emotional and spiritual needs. A good funeral helps shepherd us through the gateway of grief, but a poor one leaves us feeling confused, empty and dumped. When we are leading our own community through a shared loss we are all grieving together in our different ways – the minister may be the 'leading learner' on the journey. Taking the necessary steps to recover from our own losses, recent and historical, is an essential part of being fit to practise ministry. Being alongside others in their grief is very demanding on our own hearts.

Ministering in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic loss can be a danger zone. I'm thinking of a woman who heard of the sudden violent death of her own brother, and the next day was visiting a bereaved family who had also suffered a sudden and young loss. Over the coming days and weeks she performed all the necessary duties well, including the funeral, but a few months down the line her colleagues were concerned about her. 'You seem to be on autopilot' they said, 'It's as if you're not really "in" anymore.' We identified the nature and effects of shock, how she had coped through that terrible time, and what was the grief work she needed to do now. Talking for the first time in a safe place about her brother's life and death, and the changed landscape of her own life, she was able to come 'back to her senses'.

The Sheldon Hub, [www.sheldonthub.org](http://www.sheldonthub.org), doing healthy ministry together: learn, share, connect. It's secure and it's free.

✉ *Sarah Horsman is the Warden at Sheldon – heart & soul for ministry – in Devon.*

## Yorkshire Liturgists' Network

'From tiny acorns...' And while Praxis Yorkshire's six-monthly colloquium can hardly be compared with 'a mighty oak', it certainly is successful as a small discussion forum for liturgists – and one which requires little in the way of resources.

The colloquia began in an extremely understated way, simply with members of the Praxis Yorkshire committee sharing their liturgical interests after meetings. It took very little organising to choose a broad topic in advance and ask committee members to speak for 7½ minutes on something even remotely related – with a further 7½ minutes for questions and discussion. Only a little more organising was needed to choose a slightly larger venue, a title, 'Yorkshire Liturgists' Network', and to invite interested colleagues and friends to come and listen – or to speak: there are normally 6-7 speakers, and we expect between 12-16 people – though we could easily cope with 20!

Our last colloquium in March on 'one-off liturgical events' included such contributions as 'A Walking Nativity', 'An Urban Rogation service', and 'Preparing a Cathedral service on national social issues'. Our next will be between 12 noon – 2 pm on Tuesday, 12th September, at Leeds Diocesan Office, Church House, 17-19 York Place, Leeds, LS1 2EX – bring your own lunch!

✉ *John Moss is a Reader in the Diocese of Leeds.*

## Whole Life Worship

How engaged is our gathered worship on a Sunday with the reality of our congregation's everyday lives, Monday to Saturday? Are church services just an escape from the world for an hour or so each week? Or are they an opportunity to bring our whole lives to God, to be re-orientated by God's bigger story, empowered for service and sent out to continue worshipping in the world? These are questions that have gripped us as we have led engageworship (a ministry of the Music and Worship Foundation) for the past ten years.

So we were thrilled when we were approached by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity to work on the *Whole Life Worship* project. LICC is passionately committed to see every Christian equipped for whole-life discipleship, living out their calling wherever God has placed them. They have championed the breaking down of a sacred/secular divide, and have recognised the importance of developing our gathered worship so that it reflects God's heart for every aspect of life.

We wrote the book *Whole Life Worship* (IVP, 2017) in conversation with LICC and input from other practitioners (Graham Kendrick, Graham Cray, Geraldine Latty, Keith Getty, among others). A turning point happened in February 2016 when we invited around 40 worship leaders, pastors, theologians and songwriters to join us for a consultation day. We sent them (with fear and trepidation) the first half of the book with a request for feedback. As we explored the heart of the project with them, heard their comments and shared their perspectives, we were immensely encouraged and inspired.

This gathering raised an important issue: a book alone, read by just a pastor or music leader, would not be enough. Churches needed to go on this whole life worship journey together. So we have also created the *Whole Life Worship: Journey Pack* to accompany the book. It has flexible service plans, a breadth of worship ideas, sermon outlines and song/hymn suggestions. It also includes a USB pen with ready-to-use animated videos, PowerPoints and small group sessions. Our prayer is that every church will be able to engage in this journey in ways that are appropriate for them. But beyond that, that every Christian will be empowered to live whole lives of worship and service to God, wherever they find themselves.

✉ *Sam and Sara Hargreaves run engageworship. Whole Life Worship training Saturdays are taking place in Bath on 17th June, Balham on 23rd September and High Wycombe on 18th November. Visit [engageworship.org/WholeLifeWorship](http://engageworship.org/WholeLifeWorship) for more details on the days and the resources.*

## Colin's Column

Many moons ago I was a Church of England representative on the Council of the old British Council of Churches, the major national ecumenical instrument of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The different denominations in turn took responsibility for organizing and leading our corporate worship at, say, Swanwick. Anglicans, Baptists, URC, Methodists and Salvation Army folk all had a go (Rome was not in membership), and imaginative leadership went into providing varied non-sacramental orders. The events varied denominationally in the hymns chosen, but they varied as much, I think, with the leaders' individual creativity. So we all went along, sang the hymns, heard the word, assented to the prayers, and, when so bid, placed the pebbles in the wicker basket.

But the coming of West Indian Pentecostalism in the post-BCC world did not well fit this programme. To ask a leader from, say, the New Testament Church of God to lead an ecumenical group in the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland (now Churches Together ditto) was a recipe for near-failure or a kind of soft implosion. Why? Well, because the corporate worship of Pentecostalism is corporate – the congregation is alive; bodies are swaying; faces are moving; arms are aloft; and there is a dynamic afoot, even an electricity, between the leader and the people. How then are such worship-leaders, well bonded with their people in their home assemblies, to stir into liveliness an atomized congregation of ageing orderly ecumaniacs, each used to formal worship, each unaccustomed to freedom of expression in worship, each well drilled in not rocking boats or stepping out of line in normal Sunday congregational life? I leave that scenario to your imagination – it is fairly strong in my memory.

However, perhaps it has something to say to our Anglican (and often ageing) congregations. My own Sunday activities vary between helping keep the show on the road in vacant parishes, going rather further than that in taking responsibility for leading worship in a vacant parish through the whole of Lent and Holy Week to Easter, and at intervals acting as a fall-back bishop doing confirmations when a front-line bishop is not available. I do therefore have opportunity to compare notes on how the services go.

It is very regular for folk to comment favourably at the door about confirmation services, even to the point of saying 'How much livelier that was than most Sundays'. Now I do not think this evaluation is attributable to COB's input (though I do my best). Rather I am able to reply: 'The congregation makes the difference: with a confirmation, they get there earlier, they sit further forward, they love the candidates, they are expectant before we start, they are ready to sing, and they do not need cranking up as they may on some Sundays.' Of course the candidates add to this – not least with testimony, but also simply by being on show, being named, being identified, as believers. But it is the surging engagement of the congregation at large which is really distinctive.

Can that be prolonged? Can a continuing pastor – whether incumbent or merely locum – so lead a Sunday congregation (perhaps by steps hardly visible from one week to the next) that a change comes over the whole sluggish scene? I have run out of space. But I think this is what we should mean by liturgical formation?

✉ *Colin Buchanan is a former Bishop of Woolwich.*