

Together

No 81 Autumn 2012

in Sussex

DID YOU MISS THE TAX BUS?

*If you did there is
still time to catch up*

Full marks if you saw this when it passed through Sussex in September. With an increasingly angry nation reading about UK corporations, at home and abroad, taking advantage of legal loopholes and offshore tax havens to slash their tax bills, and stimulated by comedian Jimmy Carr and Take That star Gary Barlow, it could not be long before the Chancellor and the Prime Minister jumped to the high moral ground and joined in with some strong aggressive language.

So full marks to Christian Aid and Church Action on Poverty for teaming up and going for the jugular with a campaign to urge David Cameron to act on his words and tackle global tax dodging, beginning with this bright red double decker Tax Justice Bus, on its 53 day journey taking the message of tax injustice to churches and communities across the country.

But it is not only a challenge to the Prime Minister. It is also a challenge to thousands of equally angry and offended pew-sitters to translate their anger and shock into a successful campaign which enables the Prime Minister to do what he says he wants to do.

Tax dodging is big business. Government figures tell us that about £35 billion is lost every year due to tax dodging — more than the amount the Government is cutting from public services



Courtesy Church Action on Poverty

— and every pound lost is one less for public services and tackling poverty where we live.

Christian Aid puts the annual loss to developing countries at nearer \$160bn, one-and-a-half times the global budget, as unscrupulous multinationals take advantage of tax havens, avoid local taxes and so deprive the country where they work of money that could be spent on providing clean water, healthcare and decent education.

So here are two good reasons at least to sign a postcard calling on the Prime Minister to make two vital changes:

one, to require companies to report on profits made and taxes paid in every country where they operate so that they can be held to account, and

two, to require tax havens to share information about money with other countries flowing through them.

For further information see www.christianaid.org.uk/tax-bus or Twitter (@taxbus2012).

STILL TIME TO STEP ABOARD

On Other Pages

Can we do anything to wipe out Tax Dodging? Bolivia points the way. Page 2.

How are we to tackle the problems of Social Care in a time of economic stringency? Pages 3, 4 & 5.

Can we bridge the gap between tradition and modernity and provide specialised leadership training for new churches in a new age? Pages 6 & 7.

Tough Times raise Tough Questions

(Ian Says . . . on page 2).

Questions on how we relate to our local community (pages 3, 4 and 5).

Questions about new ways of 'being church'. (pages 6 and 7).

How to embody and make use of past experience (page 8).



Ian says . . .

As I write, the challenges which many of us face seem so pressing that asking you to consider how you can help others must seem either unrealistic or unsympathetic. Looking at our corporate identities some of us are facing public embarrassment or scrutiny like never before. Others may feel as though our national leaders are locked on a collision course with Government over matters that are particularly challenging here in Sussex as we attempt to care for the people in the area whose views on human sexuality are at variance with Church tradition. Other churches are facing a period of settlement as new senior leaders take up their roles and begin to find their feet. Meanwhile the country is facing austerity cuts that feel very uncomfortable and our political leaders have not let go of the Big Society concept. We may no longer hear the phrase as often as we did but we can be left in no doubt that it is still about top-down direction, not bottom-up creativity and innovation.

The issues may be very much of our time or age but the challenges they present hardly compare to the pressures facing the Jews in the days of Jeremiah 29, when the word from God was not to hunker down and wait for the exile to end but rather to put down roots and flourish despite the challenges. Then, says God, as the society around you flourishes, so your sense of fulfilment will also emerge.

So, despite the news and the experience of some of us in the light of contemporary or historic decisions, our response needs to be to look around, to see those who are even more broken than we are and do what we can to help. Let us bless those leaving for new roles and welcome those who have arrived from outside the area. Now that the Torch Relay has passed through our counties, let us take the opportunity to challenge the Government over the taxation injustices which the Christian Aid bus has illuminated (if that was needed) and see if we can respond to the social care need which our local government colleagues are grappling with.

Finally, forgive a personal comment following Alec's kind interview last time. Whatever the outcome of the election in November, my desire to be the Police and Crime Commissioner is no way a reflection of my experience as County Ecumenical Officer for Sussex. In fact quite the contrary, one is the consequence of the other. I have been thrilled to work among you for 11 years and it may be that I continue to do so for a little longer. Few decisions to apply for a new job depend on 100,000 or so people on the interview panel. I cannot hide my decision from you if I need your help with a reference to pass through the selection process. Whatever the outcome I will communicate with you again, even if it is as your new Police and Crime Commissioner.

Ian Chisnall
Mission and Unity Co-ordinator

BOLIVIA: Can We Do It? Yes, We Can

The first step towards achieving action on tax dodging, offshore funds and international investment is persuading women and men in the pew that they can do something about it. Why not take a leaf out of Bolivia's book?

In 2006, only 18% of the value of oil and gas exports stayed in Bolivia. Today, thanks to a popular campaign, led partly by Christian Aid partner, the Centre for Labour and Agricultural Development (CEDLA), it is 50% and increased tax revenues mean 2.4 million of Bolivia's most vulnerable people receive direct financial support, school children have the money to buy school books and uniforms and everyone over the age of 60 gets a monthly state pension. How?

First, by helping to organise huge popular protests CEDLA mobilised thousands of Bolivians to put pressure on the government to nationalise its oil and gas industries. This success, which can be attributed to CEDLA's work in helping

ordinary Bolivians to understand the unfair taxation system that existed before 2006, means that Bolivia's own people benefit from its natural resources and also enables them believe change is possible. CEDLA's radio shows and leaflets ensured that people from all social backgrounds got the information they needed and that they had a voice.

Second, with data from CEDLA, Christian Aid were able to produce a report on the Bolivian tax situation and to suggest more effective ways to tax the hydrocarbons industry. In turn, CEDLA were able to use the report successfully to influence the drafting of a new hydrocarbons law and to renegotiate taxes being charged to transnational companies.

CEDLA continues to monitor Bolivia's expenditure from its oil and gas revenues. This ensures that it doesn't disappear into the pockets of politicians or the country's elite but continues to benefit the people of Bolivia.

THE DILNOT JIGSAW

Ever since the publication of the Dilnot Report, Social Care has tended to dominate the agenda of national and local government; the one uncertain what to do and the other puzzling over how to do anything in a time of such financial stringency. Less so, perhaps, the agenda of the churches, but that could all change. Stand by to be wooed by your local Council. We can all agree the current system is far from perfect and more money is needed but too much of the publicity is too general. It fails to clarify which bits of social care we are talking about, never mind the different ways of addressing them.

Churches in general are good at responding to needs and have been in the social care business for centuries. Unfortunately they are not always as good at working together and even less at collaborating with local government and other agencies, not only to meet the needs but (more seriously) to assess the problems on a broader basis or create a climate of public opinion by initiating local discussions to reflect on government proposals and evaluate them with a view to changing attitudes.

So what are the prime needs of social care in your community? How is your local authority responding and how can churches make a better contribution? (See pages 4-5.)



SOME PIECES JUST DON'T FIT

Hundreds of pieces, all shapes and sizes, some fit at once, some not at all, and some pieces must be missing. Not unlike Dilnot. But who is in charge? Who is helping whom? Who sees shapes but not colours? Who persists and who soon gets bored? (See West Worthing page 4 for the story.)

Facing cuts and maintaining services at the same time, both East and West Sussex County Councils right now are busily working out how best to respond. Before long they will be coming with the begging bowl, not for money but for volunteers and help in all sorts of practical ways, including greater use of church premises.

Now is the time for local churches to come together to ask questions, initiate debate and share the load. **Ecumenism and mission in one package.** West Sussex have shared some of their ideas for development, reminding us that Adult Social Care is only part of the story.

Last year 360 potentially homeless young people were saved from the streets and a Quick Access Beds programme now avoids the need to place young people in unsuitable accommodation where they may be more at risk.

Safe Place, in Horsham, which seeks to improve the safety of people with learning difficulties, is to be extended to Worthing, Adur and Arun and businesses and local organisations will be encouraged to display Safe Place stickers identifying where people can go if they feel threatened in the street.

A national Community Learning Trust pilot scheme gives local communities more power to evaluate local needs, choose courses for their area and target local resources. It sets out to empower adults through improved access to learning that improves community, family and individual lives; to enable achievement that inspires adults to enjoy healthier, active and more independent lives, to help people back into employment and to bring communities together to develop adult learning, tailored to community need and aspirations.

WSCC makes no bones of the fact that a cut of £79m is substantial and changes in service and working practice are inevitable but are committed to a programme which will save as much as possible, retain people and their needs as a priority, endeavour to use enforced changes as an occasion for a positive re-think, and look to churches and other voluntary bodies for support. Here or there a church may hear the call.

For details here and on pages 4-5 we are indebted to West Sussex Council. Further information is available on www.westsussex.gov.uk and if any church initiates a programme as a result WSCC Media Dept would like to be informed.

A JIGSAW PRAYER

Father, I have hundreds of pieces and a chance to create order out of chaos.

I begin with the straight edges, then the clear colours, followed by the delicate shades, and hope to finish with a beautiful picture

I know the frustration of trying to bring together ones that don't fit, and look as if they never will

I know the difference between two pieces which really fit and others which only come together under force and I understand how that can never work and how force here will prevent other things from working elsewhere

I know the struggle of trying to find the very thing I want, to the point where I am sure it is not there, and then all at once it jumps out and hits me

and the thrill of seeing the whole when finished

Then when I think I have created order out of chaos I suddenly realise I have done no such thing.

I have simply discovered the order which was there in the first place until someone broke it into little pieces.

Father, is this what you want us to do with the world? Not for us to create order out of chaos, but to spend our lives searching for the order you intended when you created us and perhaps to acquire new skills in how things and people best fit together

Try the 5-Way Test

- 1 What is your community's **greatest need**? Is it residential care, universal disability benefits for the over 40s, care and support for young people, or what? How many require full support, possibly for a lifetime, and how many minor and temporary?
- 2 Is the **priority** dementia or advanced frailty, safeguards to ensure quality of care, low-level or preventive support and services?
- 3 Are the **prime calls** for support to carry out personal or domestic routines or to sustain employment in work, education, leisure or social relationships.
- 4 To what extent are **social needs** related to health care, security, housing or public health?
- 5 Is the **basic need** 'people need', protection from extreme costs, means testing for some, capping for others, different patterns for young and old or help with planning life for those inbetween.

Funds, Grants and Donors for Broadwater

Broadwater Baptist is a church with much experience of funding and has not hesitated to take advantage of grants for the benefit of both church and community. It describes itself as 'an inclusive church wanting people to feel at home' with them and that means not only individuals but also other groups and organisations including the local authority. David Hill, minister for the last 23 years, says they are prepared to work with all people and groups which are 'morally positive and spiritually neutral' provided they can maintain integrity and trust on all sides.



The Wave Cafe, which is open Monday to Friday and which last year served 20,000 meals or snacks to local people, is the hub for much of what goes on in the premises and serves as the church's main interface with many local people.

The result is that what was a fairly traditional Baptist church (with one or two halls alongside) when built in 1968 has been modified and transformed over the last five years into an excellent suite of premises, thanks to an open ministry in cooperation with the local community and West Sussex CC.

Grants have played an important part in it. Without £500,000 from West Sussex to build a Children and Family Centre it may

TO FUND OR

Churches which feel ready to increase their commitment to social care or indeed any other Dilnot-related project will first want to take a close look at their community to assess the needs and opportunities in the light of their resources. The next step may be to check with the local authority and explore the possibility of grants.

West Sussex County Council, for example, have three grant programmes covering Prevention and Wellbeing, Community Initiative and Social Enterprise. All provide for low level prevention or wellbeing type services to be run by external organisations such as churches and would like to hear from organisations willing to provide innovative, community based activities for people and enable social opportunities for participants to make friends and see people.

Their objectives include social contact and stimulation, activity and exercise, occupational or educational activities, peer support groups and maintaining or restoring independence.

Similar information from East Sussex was not available but CT Eastbourne Newsletter reports that in recognition of the invaluable work done by community and voluntary groups Eastbourne Council Plans next year to award £330,000 in Community Grants: £180,000 in major revenue grants (£10,000 plus), £60,000 in smaller (£10,000 or less) as well as the devolved ward budgets of £10,000 allocated to each of the nine wards.

never have got going, but that is not the whole story. Central to their work today is the Wave Centre, with a Cafe and a range of flourishing activities, sometimes with as many as 2,000 people passing through in a week.

One office houses two WSSCC staff members coordinating the County's programme for foster care and work with children; another the local midwives. A Milk programme provides classes on breast-feeding, there is 'a space' where women threatened with violence can drop in and under the Sure Start Initiative the Church organises work for the under-fives with a safe play area garden at the rear of the premises.

This has given them a lot of experience organising funding and they are always on the lookout for potential donors.

So what are the problems and hazards? 'Priority number one', says David Hill, 'is to ensure your plans are legally watertight, preferably with a solicitor who understands what you are trying to do'. They organise their premises in four ways: some they lease, some they rent, some for the church and some in common.

Some may question to what extent it is still a church. The answer depends on your view of what a church is, but David Hill has no doubt. Their emphasis on prayer, worship and mission is strong as ever but is directly related to local, practical action and undergirds everything else.

The worry that donors or tenants may want to impose conditions or make requests which some members would consider inappropriate seems unfounded. 'On the few occasions it has happened', he says, 'they manage to sit down and talk it out, and even find it a stimulus to re-think their own position on matters previously taken for granted'.

Naturally they like to believe that their mission has been an enrichment of the community, and many of their partners would agree, but they are also humble and wise enough to acknowledge that the new patterns of relationship have also enriched the church.

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NOT TO FUND

Priority will be given to organisations offering

Open access service offering comprehensive advice on welfare benefits, money, debt advice, housing and employment

Community development and support services

Youth engagement and activities

Support for homeless people and rough sleepers

Projects which address financial inclusion

Projects which support unemployed people back into work.

Few will question the need for churches to be aware of their local communities and be ready to respond to needs as they arise but some will have doubts about any church majoring on one particular aspect of the gospel. Others will question the wisdom of getting in any way tied into (and therefore to some extent dependent on) government funding, local or national. Many will ask what is to happen when suddenly, due to circumstances beyond their control, the funding stops or is severely cut.

There are other hazards. One person who had gone through this process more than once, and fairly satisfactorily, was quick to point out that it was a lot of work, you had to bring together a lot of information to establish credibility and financial capability, and then to ensure that you finished up doing what you wanted to do without adjusting your plan simply to get the money and finishing up with something different.

What can the Local Authority do? West Sussex CC has Plans

To minimise the impact of changes in social care WSCC is working on a model to promote independence focussing on resources in the Regaining Independence Support Service, telecare and the community equipment service. Support for vulnerable adults with learning difficulties will continue to maintain and promote wellbeing and independence and prevent the need for more complex services. Those no longer eligible and their carers will be advised of other available services.

Focus on needs 'substantial and critical' many residents who have lost support for 'moderate need' have all been reassessed. The majority will not touch with the services since most of them also have some substantial or local need and any changes to services or funding are taking effect over a period consistent with their needs and abilities.

Health and Wellbeing Hubs will provide a central point of contact for information and advise people on many community activities such as lunch clubs or healthy walks, available in their local area.

Support for vulnerable adults with learning difficulties will continue to maintain and promote wellbeing and independence and prevent the need for more complex services. Those no longer eligible and their carers will be advised of other available services.

County will continue to run eight specialist day centres. The closure of the others has already resulted in an extension of community day facilities, voluntary sector day clubs, and the County Council is anxious to work with communities interested in providing alternative day activities as a means of covering some of the services.

Age with Confidence initiative will help in maintaining a good quality of life in the county and much thought is being given as to the best ways of enabling us to continue to live well in our advancing years, an important aspect of which is financial planning through Carewise with support for early dementia diagnosis through Memory Assessment Clinics.

Now the 5-Way Response

- 1 Use noticeboards and magazines to publicise local community groups, services and activities.
- 2 Offer hospitality to local community groups and activities.
- 3 Recruit befrienders and buddies to visit people in their homes and link them with the community.
- 4 Open doors for Prevention Assessment Teams or Wellbeing Hub staff to discuss specific issues such as, healthy eating, falls prevention and stroke awareness.
- 5 Help Health Advisers to target people with no particular health conditions who therefore may not visit their GPs on a regular basis to benefit from free checks.

A Different Approach for West Worthing

West Worthing Baptist has a firm commitment to using its premises for the benefit of the local community, regularly offering hospitality to community groups but so far without seeking outside funding.

This summer they introduced a new line — a mini-break for the elderly, a 'holiday at home' away from regular routine and washing up for those who are prevented from the more traditional breaks by age or infirmity.

Well aware that you don't help young people to feel part of the church just by putting things on for them, they decided to give them a real role and consult younger members of the congregation on the idea and enlist their help. It worked, and for three days in August young teenagers and senior citizens created an event with a positive outcome for both.



If this suggests that building a tower calls for intergenerational skills and experience that is only half the story. In this case the game is to take bits of the tower away and replace them without destroying the structure.

Not unlike Dilnot.

Of course they all went home every night, but for three days they enjoyed being fetched and carried and lived and played together. Morning coffee, a mid-day meal and afternoon tea, an experienced cook and young helpers, interspersed with games, puzzles, quizzes, craftwork, videos, snooker, carpet bowls and much conversation and laughter.

Finally, in true Olympic spirit, creative teenagers came up with Awards and Medals for a closing ceremony and when asked whether they would like to repeat the experiment in 2013 young and old voted unanimously in favour.

Brighthelm and City Gate become Partners

Gwyn Davies, a member of City Gate Eldership Team, has the story

City Gate Church has been running a community centre (City Gate Centre) on London Road in Brighton for the past 20 years. With the lease drawing to a close, it was time to look for a new home but finding anywhere that met our criteria proved unproductive. Location was crucial. It was important to meet where there were people but we felt no call to areas where none of our members lived and that meant somewhere in the 'central corridor' from Hollingbury/ Hollingdean through Preston Circus to the seafront.

In 2010 the Pioneer Network of churches, of which we are part, had its focus on pioneering, breaking new ground, partnership and hosting the presence of God. So might partnership be something God was leading us into?

Then, in Summer 2011, when Andy Au was looking for an outdoor venue for some Movement In Worship (MIW) outreach and the council was unable to offer anything one minister suggested he approach Brighthelm about using their gardens, which are in the heart of the city. An approach by Andy to the minister, Gerald Munroe, was well received and Brighthelm embraced the idea of MIW using the gardens. As a result, when Gerald Munroe discovered that we were a year away from leaving our building and had no firm direction about where we were going, he suggested the possibility of partnership with Brighthelm.

We spent the next few months asking the church to pray and consider this offer whilst engaging in talks with the Brighthelm congregation. Our traditions and style of worship are very different but we share a heart for mission and a common vision to reach our local community. One of our core values at City Gate is Unity, so we are naturally excited at the possibility of expressing unity with another congregation in the city in a tangible way.

We plan to meet separately for worship from September, but to overlap for coffee to get to know one another, coming together as Brighthelm conclude their worship around 10.45 and moving into the auditorium for our time of worship around 11.15. Having our office base in Brighthelm will give us a more regular presence in the building and enable us to join with Brighthelm for midweek prayers and outreach to other users of the Brighthelm building.

The Brighthelm congregation is low in numbers and capacity but has a great heritage. City Gate has energy and passion which we can bring to an established community. The central location en route from the main station feels very much like a city gate. Many of our members are already involved in inter-church activities like Healing on the Streets (HOTS) and Street Pastors, and we feel that this draws us further into the heart of the city. We also have a strong creative side to the church and are excited about getting to know the North Laine community.

Sheila Clouting, Church Secretary and a Trustee of Brighthelm comments, 'This is something which we warmly welcome. We recognise that in many ways we are very different congregations. Brighthelm is a long-standing traditional Reformed church with a sense of ministry to the centre of Brighton, albeit with reduced numbers and an ageing congregation. City Gate is a young mission, mainly middle-aged members and young families, and with a totally different ethos, especially when it comes to worship. On the other hand, there are values and commitments which we share. Both us us are strong on green issues, for example, and we both have a sense of pastoral care for the local community in ways that Brighthelm practised years ago but can no longer accomplish. City Gate's presence will complement an older congregation and we look forward to sharing our ministry and exploring our mission together'.

ALL CHANGE AT THE MEETING HOUSE

As we go to press we learn that Sussex University Chaplain Gavin Ashenden will be leaving at the end of the present academic year to concentrate on writing and in due course will assist with parish work in Jersey. Coming so soon after the the departure of Andrew Robinson (see page 8) this marks the end of an era.

Gavin came from parish work in Southwark Diocese in 1989. He was the first Anglican to hold the post and saw the Meeting House as his parish headquarters. For over 20 years he has led a team of honorary chaplains recommended by their churches of which Andrew was a senior member. Every Sunday during term he has provided an open-ended form of worship for the spiritual wellbeing of students and staff from a wide variety of traditions and continued the tradition of the Sussex Christmas Lessons and Carols like nowhere else.

Changes over the years have not made life easy. Government policy, cuts and staff changes have contributed to the diminishment of the Meeting House. In 1989 the Chaplaincy Team met the needs of young Christians exploring their



faith in a new environment and most older students and staff were lapsed churchgoers. Today an increasing majority have never been churchgoers and other faiths are in ascendancy. In the secularism and Marxism of the 1980s the Meeting House at least was a friendly enemy. In today's highly secular culture it is seen as skilled in therapy but not much else.

Through all these changes Gavin has steadfastly battled through troubled waters. Maintaining a Sunday morning worshipping community was not easy. More conservative evangelical Christians instinctively suspected the Chaplaincy of liberalism. Islam, an ally when fighting secularists was (in its more aggressive forms) a threat to the faithful. Gavin met, listened to and confronted each in turn while refusing to be pigeon-holed as intellectual, catholic or evangelical, always setting himself to identify with the best and repudiate the worst.

It will be interesting to see how the new regime shapes up. The University holds the reins and the churches will inevitably wonder to what extent they will continue to be involved.

A Church for the Unchurched

In a changing society comes a call for new ways of 'being church' and *mission shaped ministry (msm)* offers one way of training people to explore the issues and reflect on possibilities. Sunday is no longer 'the day of rest' it used to be.

In older traditional churches congregations are not what they were and in very few is a commitment to weekly worship or Bible study any longer the norm. General religious education and basic Bible knowledge can no longer be taken for granted, with far-reaching consequences for preachers. For many the local (parish) church is no longer the only (and not necessarily the most appropriate) network. Church programmes based on a lifetime commitment to one pattern of churchmanship are ill suited to a mobile community, with a variety of cultures, and particularly unsuited to many who see themselves as on a journey moving on from one expression of church to another. Back to Church Sunday and similar ventures have done something to fill the gaps but are by definition addressed to the 'lapsed church' in a world where the masses are 'unchurched' and on the move. We are a travelling people and the everpresent rucksack is a constant reminder.



mission shaped ministry, offspring of Fresh Expressions, is an international ecumenical organisation founded in 2004 by the Methodist Council and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York which can now boast a wide range of partners. In Sussex *msm* enjoys the support of Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, the United Reformed Church and the Salvation Army.

Fresh Expressions sets out to develop a theology of renewal relating the ministry of the church to contemporary culture alongside 'fresh expressions of church' in a fast-changing world for the benefit of those outside the traditional churches.

The *msm* teaching programme emphasises listening to people and entering their culture for the purpose of creating Christian community. Not unlike what many of the more enlightened

missionaries did when they set to work overseas in the 19th century, it is a programme for the 'unchurched', a church that epitomises the dream of William Temple when he said 'the church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members'.

As a phrase 'fresh expressions of church' can be very woolly, amounting in some cases to little more than a new church noticeboard, but for *msm* the lines of demarcation are clear. It all boils down to intention.

If the intention is to establish a new community or congregation specifically for those who have never been involved in church (the 'un-churched') or once were, but left for whatever reason (the 'de-churched'), then it is a 'fresh expression' of church in the making and may well look very different from the norm. If on the other hand it is simply to attract people to an existing church, laudable though that may be, then it is not 'fresh expression'. 'Fresh Expression' is not a stepping stone into existing church but a new church in its own right.

It is a church for changing culture, founded on listening and service, with an incarnational mission and a potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context. *msm* seeks to train ministry for such a church.

Carl Chambers (Christ Church Brighton/Church in a Pub), who leads a fresh expression of church in a school and a pub and has taught on the course, describes it as 'an excellent way for people to think through how we reach the unchurched in our country.'

The next Course, which takes place in Pevensey, offers a variety of modules over five Saturdays (January 19, February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18 and June 16) and a residential weekend. The cost is £250, which covers all materials, refreshments and weekend away and the deadline for booking is November 30.

Further information from Liz Adshead. Email liz.admin@seba-baptist.org.uk. Tel 0144233926. The Rucksack © 2012 freshexpressions.org.uk

WORTHING THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Programme 2012-13

October 29, *Christianity and Punishment*,
by Christopher Campling, Worthing
Former Dean of Ripon

November 26, *'The love that moves the sun
and other stars': Reflections on the Mystical Path*,
by Harvey Gillman, Brighton

January 28, *'I did it whose way?'* *Christian
Theology in conversation with the myth of self-
determinism*, by Hazel Sherman, Worthing

February 25, *George Herbert, Pastor and
Penitent*, by Michael Campling,
Bloxham, Oxfordshire

March 25, *David as a Site of Social Memory*,
by Diana Edelman, University of Sheffield

Worthing Theological Society began in 1993, the child of a series of lectures initiated by Father John Medcalf, a Roman Catholic priest in Shoreham, which demonstrated a thirst for contemporary scholarship, sound instruction and depth in faith. When the series came to an end with his departure regular attenders from West Worthing Baptist Church picked up the baton and so began an institution which this year comes of age. Growth has been astonishing as an occasional 25 at the beginning rose to a regular 60-70, topping 100 if the speaker was well-known or the topic of wide or controversial interest. Current average is around 50, with members coming from Chichester in the west and Bexhill in the east. Lecturers have included Bishop Spong, Richard Harries (when he was Bishop of Oxford), Bruce Kent, Colin Morris and Paul Oestreicher. The objective is good intellectual discussion of theological issues on the broadest basis and though predominantly Christian there is room for people of other faiths and no faith at all and for the inclusion of issues which concern them.

FROM JERUSALEM TO ATHENS

*Alec Gilmore goes to meet Canon Andrew Robinson
on his retirement from Falmer and the University Chaplaincy*

What has Jerusalem got to say to Athens, the church to the modern university? That is the question Andrew Robinson has been asking himself for the last forty years since he was appointed in late 1975 as Anglican Chaplain at Sussex University and Brighton Polytechnic (as it then was), and subsequently as Priest-in-charge of Stanmer with Falmer and Canon of Chichester Cathedral. Having known him over most of that time and always found him a warm, quiet and unassuming clergyman, demonstrating holiness without religiosity, solid in faith, and with a genuine concern for people — all people, when I learned of his retirement this summer I wanted to find out what made him tick.

Born in 1943, he told me he grew up in a nominally Christian home in Birmingham. He almost died of TB when he was 11. He survived, but with a deep sense of God as the 'life giver'. He knew he wanted to give something back, and decided to become a doctor. Formal faith, which only developed in school at Bromsgrove, was more the fruit of experience than doctrine, and the 'call' came when his Rector, who epitomised Anglican holiness, suggested he consider the ministry as a vocation. Andrew saw it as 'a call by God and the Church' which he could not resist.

While reading Theology at King's College, London, he was much affected by the existential questions about religion raised by Dostoevsky. He was ordained in 1968 by Bishop Leonard Wilson (former Japanese prisoner of war) and served his first curacy at Balsall Heath, Birmingham, then a city slum parish with a colourful mix of poor people, students, West Indian and Asian immigrants; an experience which he enjoyed enormously.

From there he moved to St Stephen's, Westminster, a fashionable parish, including both working class and professional folk, and increasingly became aware of his role not so much as 'bringing God to the people' as enabling people to recognise and respond to the God who was already there. Further experience with the Chaplaincy at Imperial College increased his interest in working with students.

He arrived in Sussex in the mid 70s. 'At that time', he said, 'the University was still strongly influenced by Marxist ideas and there had been occasions of social and political unrest among both faculty and students. Sussex was still deeply committed to student-centred contextual learning, the University had a vision of educating the whole person, and the inter-disciplinary groups made studying truly exciting. There was a sense of openness, and discussion groups on God's view of the world had a significant place'.

Asked how different it was today, he replied, 'Very. In those days there was a lot of space for faith. Students from Christian homes were interested in exploring their faith, often questioning much they had grown up with. Nowadays secularism dominates, balanced by

traditional Roman Catholicism on the one hand and the Christian Union on the other. Differences between the churches come second to differences between faiths, and overall I think there has been a loss of support for the spiritual lives of students, faculty and staff'.

In 1980 he became also Priest-in-charge of Stanmer with Falmer; about 120 residences in an idyllic rural setting. Probably the smallest parish in the country to boast two universities. This was what led him to address the question of what Jerusalem had to say to Athens, because 'it was in that tension,' he said, 'that I learned the difference between the clever and the wise; between ideas and experience. Ideas may change the world but spiritual experience is the life-giver — the glue which holds things together'.

So what were the major planks of his ministry? The sanctity of life and relationships which are so threatened by a commercialised world with a culture of debt and disposal, where what is useful has priority over what is valuable'.

What did he look for in the churches? 'Putting God's love and sovereignty first. More effort to identify neglect and the marginalised, because when things are tough these are so easily overlooked' He then went on with good words for the Street Pastors and for Lord Morris who epitomised old fashioned socialism which did so much for disability.

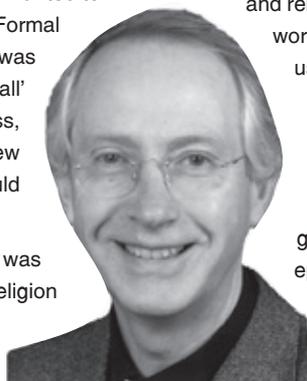
I wondered what he would say to someone preparing for ordination? 'Read. Pray. Listen. Be still. Be open. Be prepared to give and be open to receive whatever is given with joy. Remember being is as important as doing'.

He found a summary in W B Yeats, 'The Second Coming', with its 'sense of "something" being born in a world which seems about to collapse and the change it must undergo to get there, always remembering that whatever we are making of the world, at any moment, God is there to be found'.

Then he added a vivid picture. 'When I led worship in the Meeting House', he said, 'I always faced east and through the stained glass windows I could see shadowy figures of young people going about their studies. I felt as if I were seeing through a glass brightly. They were the hope for the future'.

Finally, I turned to family life. In 1969 he married Judy, a Cambridge Modern Languages graduate who trained first as a social worker and then later as a psychotherapist, and who also worked for some years at Sussex University. I asked him what had held them together over forty years? 'Love', he replied; 'with lively personality differences and many common views of life'.

So what was the champagne moment of his life and ministry? His eyes sparkled and his face lit up. Quick as a flash came the answer. 'The birth of our son'.



Together is the Newsletter of Churches Together in Sussex though views expressed are not necessarily those of Churches Together in Sussex, its leaders or its officers

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