

The Virger

Summer 2016

Issue 291



www.cofegv.org.uk

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers





Welcome to the Summer 2016 edition of *The Virger*. If you would like to include Branch news, articles, adverts, photos, book reviews or any other information you feel our readers would find of interest please send them to the Communications Officer by the Deadline Date below.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY ARTICLES ETC... SUBMITTED AFTER THE DEADLINE MAY BE HELD OVER UNTIL THE NEXT EDITION TO AVOID DELAYS IN PRODUCTION!

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**PLEASE NOTE
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THE NEXT EDITION IS:
Saturday the
20th August 2016**



TRAINING CONFERENCE 2016



"Stop Press"

Time is marching on and Conference is nearly upon us!

Booking Forms have been in every edition of the magazine, so please ensure that you have booked your place for this years event of the year.

The film at the Social Event has changed and is now "Mamma Mia" so raid your costume box and start learning those Abba songs.

**John Shearer
Training Officer**



THE DIPLOMA COURSE



The Central Council of the Guild, at the recommendation of General Synod, formulated a course to cover the work and ministry of the Verger. The course is formulated in four units set in two stages:

The first stage is the **Foundation** Unit, which comprises of sixteen assignments, covering preparation for worship, care of the building, record-keeping, and archives, care of the churchyard, and caring for the people of God.

The second stage comprises of the other three units:

The Verger as **Pastor** covers the individual's personal development, their relationship with the people and God, care for others, and for Church resources.

The Verger as **Historian** covers the history of church building, architecture, and the history of worship, including the Book of Common Prayer, and the Bible.

The Verger as **Administrator** covers communication, forms and registers, and the structures of the Church.

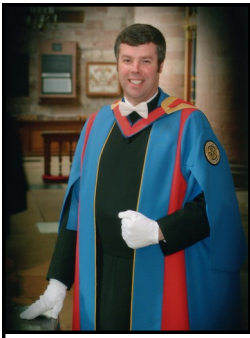
Students who complete the course successfully receive a diploma, an academic hood, and the right to use the post-nominal letters '**Dip.GV**'.

If you are interested in learning more about the Course, please contact the **Training Registrar: Susan Ansell** or the **Training Officer: John Shearer**.

FRONT COVER: ICON OF PENTECOST - An Eastern Orthodox icon portraying Pentecost, depicting the Holy Spirit as a flame over the head of each Apostle and the Theotokos, Artist Unknown.

The views and opinions expressed in the articles and letters in this edition of The Virger should be taken as those of the author unless it is specifically indicated that the Central Council of the Church of England Guild of Vergers has given its endorsement.

The Central Council of the said Guild accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or otherwise of statements, or for any offence caused by any of the articles or letters published herein.



NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Fear not my mood has lifted! After depressing you all with my unhinged mental state in the last magazine you will be glad to know that I am feeling a lot happier and a big plus is the Sun has been shining for at least two days.

Well what has been happening in the Verger's world? We have survived Easter and I should say that it was a good season here in Carlisle despite our congregation and visitor numbers being down. The lack of visitors can be put down to the continuing problems with the flooding which happened in the New Year. Structural problems with bridges and land slips have brought the railway network almost to a halt. I have never seen so many coaches stacked waiting to

transport passengers onward into Scotland. Continuing problems with the roads in the Lake District are I am sure making tourists think twice about venturing this way. Those who are brave will find us very much open for business to quote the Tourist Board.

Central Council met in the Wordsworth Room of Saint Johns College, Cambridge, as guests of Stephen Stokes our General Secretary who was so desperate to get out of attending the meeting had himself admitted to hospital. I know I am making light of why Stephen is in hospital and he knows we prayed and sent him our best wishes for a speedy recovery because at his request we recorded the meeting and delivered the tape to him in hospital so that he could write up the minutes. Then typically of him, he was on the phone as John and I were on the train back to London seeking clarification on some points. I would like to wish him on all our behalf a continued recovery as his treatment progresses with much love and many prayers.

The York Province Festival is being held on the 15th June in York please see the advert in the magazine. If you are reading this after the 15th June we had a great time, the weather was red hot and there were 250 vergers present, I am always hopeful. You will be able to read a true report in the next issue.

It's not too late to book for our Training Conference. If you are undecided or a bit unsure as to whether you are going to have fun and learn anything during our time in Malvern why not give John Shearer our Training Officer or me a ring so that we can persuade you.

I am sure you all join with me in wishing HM the Queen a very 90th Happy Birthday and every blessing for all she does. I hope you all enjoy the party or events that are planned.

Have wonderful and relaxing summer.

James Armstrong



YORK PROVINCE FESTIVAL 2016



Wednesday 15th June 2016

**To be held by kind permission of the Reverend Jane Natrass,
Priest-in-Charge of York City Centre Churches**

(All Saints Pavement, Saint Denys, Saint Helen, Saint Martin, Saint Olave, Holy Trinity Micklegate & Saint Lawrence)

10.00 Coffee at Holy Trinity Micklegate

www.holytrinityyork.org

10.30 Welcome by the Reverend Jane Natrass

10.45 Tours of the churches/sights etc...

11.45 Robing if you wish **(No Hoods)**

12.15 Eucharist - Celebrant: The Reverend Eric Robinson

Preacher: Canon Maureen Palmer

Guild Photo

13.30 Lunch and free time/sightseeing in York

15:00 Extra tours – Merchant Adventurers Hall

45 minutes guided tour £3 per head

16.30 Tea and Biscuits at All Saints Pavement

www.allsaintspavement.org.uk

17.00 Evening service at All Saints Pavement **(Not Robed)**

17.30 Departure



NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

I have just returned from Rome, having led a Pilgrimage for 28 of the Friends of Hereford Cathedral. We did and experienced so much within the seven days and I, at least, came back with a kaleidoscope of impressions of Rome and its Churches, and exhausted!. We saw the sixth to eighth century mosaics; mainly depicting Christ as the glorified Lord and with the Disciples depicted as a procession of sheep following him. We looked for the saints – yes, the well-known Peter and Paul but also lesser known saints such as Pudentiana and Praxedes; sisters who buried the bodies of those martyred. Although we were pilgrims and there were many tourists about, the Churches seemed to have a knack of encouraging all their visitors to pray. It wasn't that there were Clergy or Vergers about but somehow the whole atmosphere spoke of God and we were touched by the love of God. The possible exception to this was Saint Peter's Basilica which I found rather cold and impersonal.

Other places we visited had people praying, people quietly walking round or lighting candles. It seemed absolutely natural that one should go into Church to pray. We visited the catacombs of Saint Callisto and Saint Sebastian and in the former we had a Franciscan Monk from the Philippines to guide us. He was such a thoughtful man and we felt very privileged to have been part of his group. He also allowed us to celebrate Mass in the Chapel of the catacombs – an unforgettable experience for us all – not least for me!

This made me reflect on how we can encourage tourists to become pilgrims. It isn't that we don't have candles for people to light; Clergy and Vergers to talk to visitors; prayers at intervals throughout the day but somehow we miss something of the numinous and transcendent that is so much part of the Rome experience. I leave you to think about how we can re-capture that mystery.

As I write this letter we are preparing to celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, with all the glory of the risen Lord returning to the Father. I think of the Burne-Jones window in Birmingham Cathedral with Christ withdrawing from the apostles into heaven – a window bright with glory. So I wish you all the glory and praise of the Ascension and I look forward to seeing many of you at Malvern in August.

God go with you.

With every blessing and my love

Canon Maureen



PRAYER REQUESTS



If you know of someone for whom prayers would be of benefit or someone who has been prayed for and has recovered or shown improvement, please inform the National Chaplain or the National Welfare Officer

Blackburn, Chester & Manchester: Margaret Scott & Geoffrey Timms

Chichester, Guildford & Portsmouth: Marilyn Lee

Gloucester, Hereford & Worcester: Joy Birkin & Graham Williams

Ipswich: Stephen Stokes

Liverpool: Gratten Williams

London, Southwark & Chelmsford: Ken Allen

Oxford: Anita (Annie) Bayliss, Ernestine Denham, Jeanne Scott & Reverend Canon Roy Taylor

Rochester: Tina Lawrence

Saint Albans: Peter Hudson

Salisbury: Jean Jackson & Babs Taylor

Somerset & Avon: Pat Dawes, Lionel & Mary Holway

York: George & Doreen Cook

And everyone not specifically mentioned who need love, counsel and the grace of our Lord

R.I.P

John Haines and Christopher Nottage

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CANTERBURY AGM



On Saturday 12th March I found myself on a train crawling through the most awful fog I have seen for a good few years. It persisted when I transferred to our Chairman's car for the drive to the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Bexhill. As we arrived we were welcomed and directed to where we were to go. We then robed and walked from the Parish Hall to the church, a beautiful building full of colour and light, where we had a lovely service led by the Rector, Father David Reynish, assisted by the Reverend Eileen Webb, our Treasurer's wife.

Lunch followed, a delicious meal enjoyed by all, cooked by Cathy and Joy, assisted by Edith. The AGM followed lunch. The Branch Officers were re-elected en masse, though we have no Area Leader at present. Incidentally, the Virge given in memory of

Rosemary Ballard, a former Area Leader, was used at the service and carried by Helen who verged us in and out. This was a good reminder of the very hard working Area Leader that Rosemary was. After a jolly good natter on some points brought up, the meeting closed at 3.30 and we all dispersed.

I would like to thank all the team for a wonderful day and hope it will not be too long before we meet again. Thank you all so much.

Cherry Johnstone
Branch Correspondent



GLOUCESTER, HEREFORD & WORCESTER BRANCH NEWS



We begin our Branch report with a reflection on an article in the previous magazine. It concerned the sad news of the death of our Branch Secretary, Graham Williams. At the time of the report his funeral had yet to take place and I therefore wish to conclude that article with the events of the day. The Cathedral nave was full for Graham's service which was both a surprise and joy, especially for his family. Many Vergers attended with at least twelve robed and escorting the coffin. His family were both moved and delighted by the support.

I will never forget when later on, as I left the Cathedral to walk home of the words I overheard a father saying to his three young sons' as we all waited at the road crossing. They must have ventured into the east end of the building which was still available for tourists and seeing through into the nave had witnessed the funeral Eucharist and the grandeur of the occasion. The boys asked their dad who had died? He replied, 'It must have been a very important person for it to have been held in the Cathedral and with such splendour'. I had been tempted to add that it had been for a part-time volunteer Verger, thereby pointing out that you don't have to be such a grand person to have your funeral in a Cathedral. However, I didn't correct the family, but left the boys thinking about what their dad had said, for he was correct in that it had been for an important gentleman, as all persons are as they take that final journey to meet our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a fatherly answer to a curious lad's question but I for one was left both moved and provoked in thought as I walked home. May Graham Rest in Peace.

On Tuesday 5th April our annual quiet day was held at the House of the Open Door, Chidswickham, within the Cotswold's, a welcomed pause in a Vergers life after the total commitment of the Easter services. What a beautiful, peaceful and rewarding day it was for those of us able to make the trip.

This year we were kindly led by Canon David Truby, formerly Canon Pastor of Derby Cathedral. He gave three short talks, entitled 'The Way, the Truth and the Life' split throughout the day, they were both thought provoking and inspirational. Canon David presided over our Eucharist within the peaceful Chapel, followed by an excellent lunch. See the group photograph of the day plus a picture of our Chairman and Treasurer caught in a serious discussion out in the green fields. No doubt they were deliberating on the ins and outs for Vergers and their roles should we leave the EU! Or something equally profound.



In the coming months there is much to look forward to, including the York Province Festival in York, a visit to Saint Mary's, Fairford, a BBQ in Tewkesbury, the Training Conference in West Malvern and the Canterbury Province Festival in Salisbury.

Being a Verger is certainly not boring!

Philip Dunne
Branch correspondent



A SHORT REPORT



The first meeting of 2016 for the Ipswich Branch was held on Thursday 10th March at Saint Mary and Saint Botolph Parish Church/Community Room at Whitton, Ipswich.

Mr Kenneth Game, the Verger, welcomed everyone to the meeting. As far as talking through the agenda and reports from the various officers all went very smoothly.

As for the Branch membership we seem to be doing very well, we have sadly lost one member but have gained two new members.

After the meeting finished we had an extremely interesting talk by the Reverend Mary Sokanovic, who at present is Priest-in-Charge of Saint Mary and Saint Botolph. She told us of her past working life, both as a civilian and within the Church.

Nursing being her first vocation and then a calling to a life in Ministry and becoming Chaplain to both Bishop Nigel Stock and Bishop David. She also told us of the duties that were required of her to support both Bishops ministry, she said that she saw this as a privilege and at the same time challenging, one of the key roles (amongst many) was praying with and for them.

Both Bishop Nigel and Bishop David were at Saint Edmundsbury Cathedral before Bishop Nigel went to Lambeth Palace. As previously said, it was a very in depth talk on the working life of Reverend Mary as a Chaplain.

As with most meetings food is nearly always involved, never far away, and this was no different, a wonderful spread of sandwiches and cake plus refreshment. A good meeting.

For the social side of the Branch we have a couple of 'outings' booked within the coming months, which with good weather, should prove very enjoyable and possibly the likelihood of more at the end of the year.

Our next meeting will be our AGM in July.

Jean Cobb

Branch Correspondent & Area Leader for East Anglia



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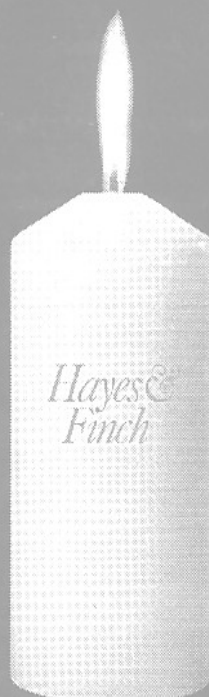
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Monday 15th - Thursday 18th August 2016

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OR EMAIL IN A PDF TO:
margaretburston@sky.com

01905 455961

Please submit your booking form by Friday 24th June 2016

TITLE: MR/MRS/MISS/MS/DR/REV/OTHER - NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ **POSTCODE:** _____

HOME TELEPHONE: _____ **MOBILE TELEPHONE:** _____

E-MAIL: _____

PARISH CHURCH ETC...: _____

ATTENDANCE: FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME (*PLEASE TICK THE BOXES YOU WILL BE ATTENDING*)

SUNDAY			DINNER
MONDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
TUESDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
WEDNESDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
THURSDAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	

COST FOR THE WEEK

SINGLE OCCUPANCY ROOM

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Sunday – Thursday inclusive £316.00 **£300.00**

Monday – Thursday inclusive £237.00 **£228.00**

SHARED DOUBLE ROOM

Sunday – Thursday inclusive £280.00 per person **£264.00**

Monday – Thursday inclusive £210.00 per person **£200.00**

ONE DAY OVERNIGHT CHARGE

The cost of one overnight delegate is £79.00 in a single room, this also includes all meals

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

DAY RATE (No Accommodation): £28.00 plus £8.00 for the evening meal

DEPOSIT OF £35.00 TO BE SENT WITH THE BOOKING FORM, OR PAYMENT IN FULL

Cheques payable to “**CEGV Conference Account**”

MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Do you suffer from anything we need to be aware of: **YES/NO** *(If Yes, please list below)*

ARE YOU ON ANY MEDICATION?: YES/NO

ALLERGIES: Do you have any allergies we need to be aware of: **YES/NO** *(If Yes, please list below)*

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS: YES/NO *(If Yes, please list below)*

NEXT OF KIN CONTACT DETAILS

TITLE: MR/MRS/MISS/MS/DR/REV/OTHER - NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ **POSTCODE:** _____

HOME TELEPHONE: _____ **MOBILE TELEPHONE:** _____

HOW DO I GET THERE?

While the Elim Conference Centre is nestled in the heart of the Malvern Hills, the M5 provides quick and easy road access when travelling south from Birmingham or North from Cardiff and Bristol.

The Centre is just two and a quarter hours from London by car, and is linked to both Birmingham and London Paddington stations by a frequent and fast rail service. The nearest airport is Birmingham International, just one hour away.

BY ROAD: The main entrance to Elim Conference Centre is located on Croft Bank. There is a car park outside the main entrance. Croft Bank is accessed from West Malvern Road (B4232). Further parking is available - follow the signs for Elim International Centre when you arrive at Croft Bank.

FOR SAT NAV: WR14 4DF

BY RAIL: The nearest stations are Great Malvern and Malvern Link.

DRAFT OUTLINE PROGRAMME FOR THE WEEK

‘ART IN CHURCH’

We encourage all delegates to attend the services to experience new traditions and customs and participate fully. Towels are provided in your rooms, but should you wish to use the heated outdoor pool, please bring your costume and your own towel.

PLEASE NOTE: ALCOHOL IS NOT PERMITTED AT THE ELIM CONFERENCE CENTRE!

Sunday 14 th August		
	18:30	Dinner
	19:15	Central Council Meeting
Monday 15 th August		
	07:45	Morning Prayer – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	09:30	Registration
	11:00	The Annual General Meeting
	12:30	Lunch
	13:30 – 14:30	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	16:00	Rehearsal for the Opening Eucharist
	17:00	Opening Solemn Eucharist and Guild Congregation – Church
	18:30	Dinner followed by Social Evening
Tuesday 16 th August		
	07:00	Morning Prayer – Church
	07:30	The Eucharist – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	10:00 – 11:45	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	12:00	Angelus & Midday Prayers – in the Centre – followed by Lunch
	14:00 – 16:00	<i>Session to be arranged with Guest Preacher?</i>
	17.15	Choral Evensong and Sermon – Guest Preacher
	18:30	Dinner
	19:00	Free Time, Swimming and/or Prayer Walk
	21:00	Compline
Wednesday 17 th August		
	07:00	Morning Prayer – Church
	07:30	The Guild Requiem – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	10:00 – 12:00	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	12:00	Angelus & Midday Prayers – in the Centre – followed by Lunch
	14:00 – 16:00	<i>Session to be arranged</i>
	17:00	Committee Meetings followed by Dinner
	18:30	Dinner
	20:45	Compline
Thursday 18 th August		
	08:00	Morning Prayer – Church
	08:30	Breakfast
	09.30	Final get together
	10:00	Rehearsal for Closing Eucharist
	11:00	Closing Solemn Eucharist – Church followed by Lunch
	12:45	Lunch and Departure



SPRING MEETINGS

Monday 14th March saw twelve members and friends plus our Branch Chaplain and a very special guest, Canon Maureen Palmer, our National Chaplain. It was lovely and a great privilege to Rothley, Leicestershire, for a midday meal. The service was slow and we were ready for the meal by the time we were served. We will try another venue next year.

During the meal, our Chairman presented one of our members, Margaret Steadman from Holy Trinity, Barrow on Soar, Leicestershire, with a potted plant and a card to acknowledge her retirement as Verger after quite a number of years, first as the Assistant Verger and then Head Verger. She has been a member of this Branch since June 1992 when she was admitted in the Church of Saint Philip and saint James, Groby, Leicestershire. Twenty-four years is a long time and we hope she will enjoy good health in the future. She will remain a member of the Guild. Thanks were given to Canon Maureen for coming and hoped she would have a safe journey home, and to the other members and friends.



Our next meeting was on Monday 25th April at Leicester's Wyggeston's Hospital, which is a combined sheltered Housing and Residential Care Home. A place of hospitality and caring.



Fourteen members, including one to be admitted at a later date, met in the Hospital's Chapel for a service of Holy Communion with hymns including "Angel voices, ever singing,"; "The Church's one foundation," and "Love Divine." The service was led by the Master of the Hospital, the Reverend Tony Leighton, assisted by our Branch Chaplain, Canon John Tonkin, who also read the Epistle. Ann Anderson, one of our members, read the Lesson, and the organist was a retired Priest, Canon John Seymour.

Following the service we had refreshments which were prepared and served by two of the lady residents of the Hospital.

William Wyggeston left this Hospital in his will for the poor in 1518. It was to house twelve poor men and twelve poor women. It was converted into flats for the elderly and poor with a lovely Chapel dedicated to Saint Ursula for them to worship in.

We have a new member, David Edwards, from Castor in Peterborough. He will be admitted to the Guild on Monday 27th June at 7 p.m. (*note the earlier time*) in the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Uppingham, Rutland. Future Branch meetings will be:

Monday 25th July at 7.30 p.m. in the Church of Saint James the Great, Birstall, Leicestershire.

Monday 15th August in the Cathedral Church of Saint Martin, Leicester.

Monday 26th September in the Church of Saint Mary, Humberstone, Leicestershire.

Robes to be worn for services please.

Marjorie Thomas, Dip GV
Branch Chairman & Correspondent

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Branch Catch-up

Your correspondent has been negligent of late, largely on account of selling up and moving house, so this catch-up covers both our Christmas Dinner in November, and our January Annual General Meeting.

November's Christmas Dinner was at The George Inn in Leadenham, Lincolnshire – a village with good links by road to much of the Branch's current membership. Despite this, sickness and various events in our Churches reduced our attendance to twelve, but those of us able to attend enjoyed a good meal and a very amusing talk from our guest, the Bishop of Grimsby, the Right Reverend Doctor David Court.



The Lincoln and Southwell Branch is, I think, unique as the only Branch not only covering two Diocese but also by straddling two Provinces!

January saw us at Southwell Minster in York Province for our AGM. The Minster shares Lincoln Cathedral's dedication to Saint Mary, and was hosting an exhibition called the Art of Mary at which the work of more than twenty artists including Celia Paul, Nicolas Mynheer, Mark Cazalet, Chris Gollon, Susie Hamilton, Sophie Hacker, Iain McKillop, and Roger Wagner was shown. The exhibition's organiser, Father Matthew Askey, kindly gave us a guided tour.

After enjoying refreshments, the Branch Business meeting was held.

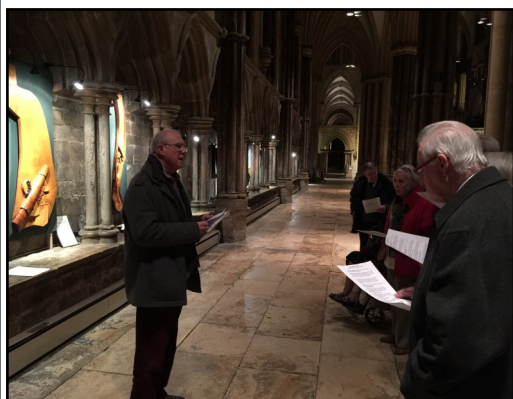
Lenten Passions

In a medieval text I saw recently it said 'if you get March weather in January, you'll get January weather in March'. Our March meeting was on a wet, cold and miserable Wednesday evening, although the graceful beauty of Lincoln Cathedral, softly lit, and the cheerful good fellowship of the twenty or more members of the Branch present dispelled the depressing effects of the weather.

We began in the Chapter House amid their Lenten art exhibition '*Passion in Paint*'. This is part of the Methodist Contemporary Art Collection of several major works and the exhibition is a partnership between them, the Diocese of Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral and the County's museum. Six of the paintings have been used for Lincolnshire's 2016 Lent Course.

We had a brief presentation by the Reverend Doctor Terry Nowell, the Methodist Minister spearheading exhibition before taking a look at the art work and its Passion significance.

We then moved to the north aisle of the Cathedral where the Reverend Paul Paynton lead us in his personal meditations on the way of the cross using the William Fairbank's Forest Stations which in themselves are both works of art and an inspiration.



The evening ended in the Cathedral's refectory with John Campbell's home-made butternut squash soup and cakes. Our Thanks go to John, Terry and Paul for the evening, and for John and his wife Pauline for the supper.

We thank you, Lord, that you have given us a glimpse of your glory;
that you have opened our eyes to new possibilities.

Go with us as we go out from here.

And help us to see you in the world around us.

We ask this in the name of Christ. Amen.

(A prayer by the Reverend Doctor Helen Hooley from Lent 2016)

Colin Beevers
Branch Correspondent



FORTHCOMING EVENTS



Wednesday 15th June - York Province Festival to be held in York

**Sunday 14th - Thursday 18th August - Annual Training Conference
Elim International Conference Centre, West Malvern**

**Monday 12th & Tuesday 13th September - Canterbury Province Festival
to be held in Salisbury Cathedral**



LIVERPOOL BRANCH NEWS



It's now over 12 months since Tracey Rodgers and I became the Secretary and Chairman of the Liverpool Branch respectively and what a learning curve that 12 months has been! The best part for me has been getting to know more of the members of the Liverpool Branch and also of being able to meet some members from the Blackburn, Manchester and Chester Branch. In December we held our Christmas Eucharist and lunch at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool when we had visitors from the Blackburn, Manchester and Chester Branch and we had a great time and good fellowship plus the compulsory raffle. I think we are trying to set a record for the longest raffle ever held in the Guild!

In March we had our AGM and admitted five Vergers from Liverpool Cathedral into the Guild, Dave Corns, Graham Hodson, Jonathan Addy, Carlos Clarke & Jack Watson. Keith James is another Verger at the Cathedral who was in hospital at the time but he will be joining the Guild at our Christmas meeting on 1st December in the Lady Chapel at the Cathedral. The admittance took place during Choral Evensong and it was both a most enjoyable and encouraging time for the Branch. I think we look a happy bunch in the photograph taken after the service.



On 25th February I was invited to join the Blackburn, Manchester and Chester Branch for their AGM and Eucharist at Blackburn Cathedral, it is a great experience to sit, listen and learn from another Guild Branch, I highly recommend it to other Branch Chairmen. Thank you B, M and C Branch for your fellowship.



On the 18th April we held our Easter Eucharist at the Parish Church of New Church Culcheth, where Freda Wilcock is the Verger and Guild member. We inducted another new member into the Branch, Chris Mason who is Verger at Saint Margaret of Antioch in Liverpool.

The Eucharist was most moving in this beautiful Church and a member of Freda's congregation gave us an informative and amusing history of the Church and its people. Many thanks to the Vicar for leading the service and to the Organist who lead us all in excellent singing, CEGV a choir in the making I think!

Gratten Williams
Branch Chairman



OXFORD BRANCH NEWS



The Oxford branch met in February at the beautiful Douai Abbey for a quiet day – which proved to be a little bit of a misnomer. The theme for the day was “The rich and wondrous tapestry of ministry”. After celebrating communion together, led by Branch Chaplain Peter Viney, we heard from two men with extraordinarily different ministries.

PAUL COLLINS

Paul used to be a Padre (Chaplain) in the Royal Air Force, and he told us of some of his postings in that role, most notably at Kandahar in Afghanistan, at the American military base. Paul described the efforts made to enhance the spiritual life of the people on the military bases, and the frustrations faced. The American Chapel was better equipped than most Churches at home in the UK, with a container filled with miscellaneous equipment – including many musical instruments – for anyone who would use them for worship. How more Americans than British people turned up for the British services. He told of the airfield memorial services for all fallen personnel before they were flown home.

Speaking of his final posting back in the UK, Paul described the strategies to link ordinary life with the spiritual life – including organising an inter-section pancake race to introduce the concept of Lent and Easter. However, emphasis was on community faith for real people, taking the “everyday” and bringing in the spiritual. In describing his earlier career, Paul spoke of his lack of success as an accountant, and his days as a policeman in London.

Paul also spoke of the more unusual duties he had to perform in the RAF – being flown out to Italy (tough job, but someone had to do it) to perform the funeral and burial service of the occupants of a crashed aircraft. In this case it was a bomber, brought down during the final stages of WW2, and recently recovered. Archives had shown that there were two British crew on board, and two Australian. The RAF had gone to significant trouble to locate and bring the families to the funeral, and even found an Italian Bagpiper to play at the service.

On a rather more thought-provoking note – Paul described how it is possible for Chaplains to suffer from PTSD too – men who have met people's spiritual needs throughout their careers: priests holding the hands of dying soldiers. They, too, need our prayers. Paul is now one of the Associate Ministers in the parish of Warfield.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE...



KEITH WILKINSON

In the afternoon, Keith Wilkinson, the Conduct (I had to ask, too – it's the title of the Senior Priest) of Eton College spoke of his career. Knowing that we had eaten lunch in the Douai Refectory, he gave us permission to snooze – and then made it impossible. The volume of laughter he induced would have awoken all but the heaviest sleeper.

Keith's father was a Marxist who believed that religion was a form of social control. However, Great Aunt Florence (from his mother's side) created near civil war by insisting that the young Keith be confirmed. And so, along with about 280 others, he was confirmed at Saint Michael & All Angels, Leicester. His father insisted "Now forget it!" but something had happened.

He went to University, taught in Hull, and went to train for Ordination at Cambridge, and was then posted to a new-town Parish on the outskirts of Peterborough. There were no Church buildings – only hundreds of new houses; there were many single-parent families. Maybe Church buildings can be a bad idea, sometimes, as people opened their doors to one another.

For one year in addition to Parish duties, Keith became Chaplain to Bishop Feaver*, who was a rather "larger than life" character. The phrase "We will pray about this" really meant "I have made my mind up!" He told of being offered a job in one Parish, along with the Chaplaincy of a very large factory, but pointed out that the present Incumbent wasn't dead yet.

Keith then was 'tricked' by his Bishop (told to report to Slough railway station where he would be met by a man in a bowler hat carrying a pink paper who would take him to a possible post which the Bishop hoped would prevent him from going to a job in Accrington in Lancashire) into serving as a Chaplain and Master at Eton College (which was a totally different experience from anything he had encountered before).

After five years he moved to become Senior Chaplain at Malvern College, where he described the true religion then as "Rugby and Cricket". But things changed and, amongst other things, with the help of a very determined nun from the Community of the Holy Name, even the First XV were taught to pray.

He moved to be Head Master of Berkhamsted School, which had been founded in 1541 – an institution of 600 boys with a Junior/pre-prep School of 400. This post was an arduous challenge as a new direction was needed – but after facing the tasks required, change took place. The school faced up to what was needed and today it is a flourishing co-educational school. (*Maybe some prayers from the 600 boys were answered: DW*)

And so on to Canterbury in 1996 where Keith became Headmaster of the oldest school in the kingdom – The King's School was founded in AD 597 by Saint Augustine. This was a wonderful posting for eleven years with the School and Cathedral occupying the dramatically beautiful Precincts of Canterbury. Then eight years ago he became the Conduct of Eton College. (Given his journey through several Independent Schools, it was ironic that his own uncle, George, years ago, had led campaigns to abolish public schools!)

Keith also spoke of recent Anglican leadership initiatives to bring the Church into the realm of effective management practices; he recalled an occasion where one speaker had presented schemes to introduce targets regarding both numbers and finance (among other measures), which he believed could only be a diversion, based on spreadsheets and measurement analysis, from the proper work of the Gospel. But another speaker at the same gathering had been refreshing, asking the Church to "embrace the suffering and weakness of life – to learn from the sick and the disabled, the weak and the poor, for it is they can teach us the things of true faith, hope and love – all that makes life truly worthwhile". A good conclusion would be to forget 'management-speak'; preach hope to the hopeless, tend the sick, visit the lonely.

The talk was liberally laced with various stories about incidents, Synods, Bishops, individuals and a cat who had made an impression on him – for better or worse – or had given amusement or which had raised questions in his diverse journey in Ministry that was now approaching 40 years and still playing!

(*There is a book of stories and alleged sayings of Bishop Douglas Feaver: "Purple Feaver" by John Kelly.)

On Maundy Thursday, Michael Golby (Branch Chairman) and Dennis Wildman (Area leader) joined the congregation of Saint John the Evangelist, Woodley, to welcome Lorna Godwin into membership of the Guild and our Branch. We were welcomed enthusiastically by the Priest, Reverend Edilberto Marquez-Picon. A gentle and kindly gentleman, he asked to be called "Eddie".

The ceremony took place at the beginning of the service, and the character and love of this congregation showed through. In the second row was a young lady with Downs Syndrome – she was looked after and helped throughout the service. Prayers were said for the previous Verger of the Church, Tony Frisby, who died recently. He had been one of the founder members of the Oxford Branch, so it was appropriate to honour him and his widow in this service.

We moved to the back of the church after the membership ceremony, to avoid being a distraction, and join family. It was from there, after the communion that I witnessed for the first time the practice of clearing and stripping the altar on Maundy Thursday. Naturally many will have witnessed this before and taken part in it, but for a newcomer this had a very profound effect. The silence and sombre mood were intense.

We congratulate Lorna and welcome her into our Branch.

Dennis Wildman
Branch Correspondent & Area Leader



NATIONAL VACANCIES ~ COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



The post of **Communications Officer** is up for election at the AGM in August.

The Communications Officer is responsible for all communications and publicity in relation to the Guild, including (but not limited to) the Guild magazine, and the Guild website. **The Communications Officer is a 3 year appointment.**

The present post holder - Marek Barden has indicated he is willing to stand for a further term.

For more information or a Nomination Form, Please Contact the General Secretary.



MAREK BARDEN ~ A BRIEF PEN PORTRAIT



My Name is Marek Barden and I shall be 45 this year. I have been a member of the Guild since 2007. I was a member of Saint Mildred's Church in Tenterden, Kent, for 25 years. Whilst there I undertook many varied roles. I moved to Bristol in 2008 and was appointed as the Verger to the Lord Mayor of Bristol in November of that year, responsible for the Lord Mayor's Chapel in the City Centre.

I first became involved with the Communications Team in 2010, assisting Amanda Berry with the production of The Virger and with other publications. I was appointed in 2012 for one year to complete the final year of that term; I was re-elected in 2013 for a 3 year term. During my time in this role I have completed the work of standardising all the National Publications; re-designed and re-launched the Website; designed new Pop-Up Banners for use at events; created a Facebook account for the Guild, which is proving popular; and continued to evolve The Virger Magazine. I have been able to keep the costs of producing The Virger & other publications low while maintaining high standards of production. I endeavour to keep the cost of postage as low as possible. I would like to continue this work, doing my part in promoting and publicising the Guild and its aims and objectives, both nationally and internationally.



NATIONAL VACANCIES ~ TRAINING REGISTRAR

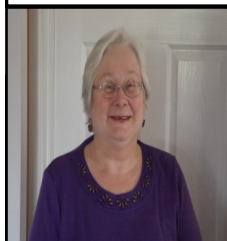


The post of **Training Registrar** is up for election at the AGM in August.

The Training Registrar is responsible, amongst other duties, for dealing with the registration of new students wishing to undertake the Guild Diploma Course. **The Training Registrar is a 3 year appointment.**

The present post holder - Susan Ansell has indicated she is willing to stand for a further term.

For more information or a Nomination Form, Please Contact the General Secretary.



SUSAN ANSELL ~ A BRIEF PEN PORTRAIT



My name is Sue Ansell and I am approaching my 65th birthday! I have lived in Cranleigh, Surrey all my life as did my mother, grandmother & great grandmother before me. I was married to Alf for almost 28 years until his death in March 2000 and have two grown up sons and two grandchildren who are 18 and 7 years old. I have been Verger at Saint Nicolas Church, Cranleigh, since July 2000. Our Rector asked me to take over when a vacancy occurred due to the previous Verger retiring. I had no idea what the job entailed but loved the Church as I had worshipped there all my life and I felt that I belonged. I loved the job from the start and the congregation were all very encouraging when I had my L plates on! For the first 7 years I also worked as an Administrator at a local Funeral Directors and I did the two jobs concurrently, enjoying both jobs equally.

I joined the Guild early in 2001 and found a new "family". I am Area Leader for my branch (Chichester, Guildford and Portsmouth). I did my Foundation Unit in 2005 followed by the Diploma in 2009. I have been Training Registrar for the past 3 years and have enjoyed doing this too and know what all the candidates go through in order to gain their qualifications. I would like to continue in this role if possible. I am currently training to be a Pastoral assistant and will be licensed in July.



NATIONAL VACANCIES ~ TRAINING OFFICER



John Shearer, the current **Training Officer** is stepping down from this role. The Central Council invite applications from members of the Guild who would be interested in taking on this role. It is the desire of the Central Council that someone be appointed to shadow John during the coming year, this person will then take on the role from next year.

The Training Officer is responsible for the administration of the Guild Diploma Course; providing support for the Training Registrar in the pursuance of his/her duties; he/she is the Chairman of the Training Committee; supporting all students as they undertake the Guild Diploma Course; and to oversee the organization and administration of the Guild's Annual Training Conference. **The Training Officer is a 3 year appointment.**

For more information and a Job Description or a Nomination Form, Please Contact the General Secretary.

The General Secretary - Mr Stephen Stokes 3 Benians Court, Cambridge CB3 0DN



LINCOLN & SOUTHWELL BRANCH ~ TWO REASONS TO CELEBRATE



The Lincoln & Southwell Branch of the Guild is about to celebrate its Silver Jubilee.

Conceived in 1990 when the three Vergers of the Lincoln Diocese met to investigate the possibility of a Branch being formed in one of the largest Diocese in the county. The Branch was formed with members from all corners of the Diocese from Grimsby to Gainsburgh & Grantham to Boston and beyond to Spalding. By mid 1991 the Lincoln Branch was well established and began to welcome members from Newark and from Nottingham in the Southwell Diocese. With the increase of members from the Nottingham Diocese by 1997 the Branch was re-named Lincoln & Southwell peaking in membership to fifty.

Breaking with the tradition of a Christmas Dinner [normally held in late November] the Branch will instead be holding a celebratory dinner on September 7th this year to celebrate our Silver Jubilee. We are hoping that many Branch members past and present will want to join us for this event and a very warm welcome is extended to the wider membership of the Guild - please put the date in your diaries - the venue is as yet to be established but if you are interested please register your interest by email to: deansverger@aol.com, more details will be distributed as soon as possible.

The second strand to our celebratory year is the acknowledgement of the ministry of Michael Haynes, former Head Verger of Saint Botolph's Church, Boston [Boston Stump] who received Maundy Gifts from Her Majesty the Queen at the Royal Maundy, this year held in Saint George's Chapel, Windsor. Mike; Secretary of the Lincoln & Southwell Branch for over twenty Years, a regular attendee at the Guild Conference, who assisted with the Guild Festival held in Lincoln and organised two Festivals held at Boston has been a good and faithful servant of the Guild as well as Boston Stump and we congratulate him.

John G Campbell
Branch Chairman



A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY



And now the end is near..... the words from 'My Way' sung by Frank Sinatra.

Do not worry, I am not (touch wood) about to pass on to the eternal light, but the end is dawning upon my treatment.

As some of you may know I have for the last 3 months been fighting Cancer, for those who are not aware of this, I am sorry that this is news, and please do not worry I am doing fine.

But let us start at the beginning, in December 2015 I started having pains in my epigastric region of my stomach (just behind the sternum) and I went to see my GP, who prescribed me anti-sickness tablets. Now the pain persisted and got worse, I even Googled my symptoms (DO NOT EVER DO THIS – I think I was told I was dead!!! although one of the things it did suggest was a tumour (which I immediately dismissed as Google getting excited)), so a month later I went back to my GP, and again I was issued different anti-sickness tablets, even though the pain was much worse. This continued until the end of February when I went back, and once again was issued with a different anti-sickness tablet, but also referred to the hospital for an ultrasound, I apparently did not fit the criteria to have a Gastroscopy (camera down throat), and the lead time for the ultrasound was 4-8 weeks!.

On Saturday 27th February I was sitting in my office when I felt a lump on the side of my face between the ear and eye, following advice I went to A&E that evening and was diagnosed with Parotoid Gland Inflammation, and I was given some antibiotics, and an anti-inflammatory. The following morning I woke up with black tarlike stools, but being a man I was like 'Oh don't worry, it will sort itself out' well I had this problem for 3 days.

On Tuesday 1st March I went to work, feeling rather weak, my work colleagues 'frogmarched' me across to my GP surgery, which happens to be opposite work, where I was seen. With my blood pressure through the floor and heart rate through the ceiling the GP order an ambulance to take me into Hospital where I was admitted with a suspected bleeding stomach ulcer, and after 5 units of blood (now up to 10) I was beginning to feel a little better. I was sent for a Gastroscopy— I bypassed the system—which identified the mass which they injected with adrenalin. On the Friday I was sent again to see if they could make anything further out when it had stopped bleeding, and they identified this as a tumour, biopsies taken and the final diagnosis is Burkett's Lymphoma Cancer of the blood).

Following a PET CT scan they identified 5 sites where the lymphomas were, and I was started on a very intensive Chemotherapy course, I have 4 rounds, and while typing this from my hospital bed I am nearing the end of cycle 3.

You will be very pleased to know that I have been very well looked after by Addenbrooke's Hospital Staff and I take my hat off to our NHS. I have also been very positive during this whole time, working from my hospital bed for the College still to keep my mind busy – I note that this was totally at my insistence and not the Colleges – welcoming visitors and generally keeping an upbeat attitude (I think the Nurses liked that!). I have been truly humbled by the hundreds of emails and phone calls of support, the visitors, the cards and the prayers that I have received.

You will be pleased, as I was, that prior to my admittance to round 3 of my treatment I had my second PET CT scan and out of the 5 sites only the one (above my adrenal gland) remained. The largest tumour, the one in my epigastric region of my stomach, has gone. So the prognosis is very good. In line with the 85% cure and eradication rate I was given at the outset.

Once again thank you for your prayers and support.

Stephen Stokes