

# THE VIRGER

The Official Magazine of the Church of England Guild of Vergers

Summer 2021 | Issue 311

## A FEW RANDOM THOUGHTS OF A RETIRED VERGER/SACRISTAN



FROM THE EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE

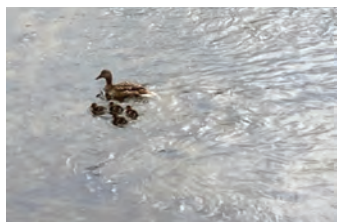
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# FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR



**S**pring blossoms in the Town Gardens, abundant wild flowers, ducklings on the river... being welcomed into a new church (and asked if I'd like to join the Sidesman's rota - which feels very much like Verger opening up duties...!). So many small changes in the last few weeks are starting to make the world feel more "normal" again, and yet so many things are



undoubtedly changed forever by this pandemic. It is a joy to have been able to welcome a family member into our home for a holiday visit - and to have a hug, which I have missed so much!

There are fewer pieces of Branch News this quarter as you are all adjusting to post-COVID meetings and getting used to new parameters - I for one am really looking forward to getting my second dose of vaccine and being able to come safely to Conference and am so looking forward to meeting up in person rather than via Zoom. It really is going to feel like a lifeline for so many of us... a chance to gather, reflect and give thanks together after a time of turmoil and change.

Looking forward to August - and a bumper Autumn edition!

**Jane Gorrie**  
CEGV Media Officer

## Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church of St. Bartholomew (also the Anglican Chapel for HMS Heron) verge

This verge was made for me by Marek Bardon. It hadn't got much history but it was made with love and care, which is equally important, if not more so.

It has been used and admired on many occasions for verging everyone from Royalty and various Admirals to the final journeys of the most junior members of the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy.

It has been admired many times, and on one occasion I was asked by a Sea Harrier engineer if it was made from a Sea Harrier flight control rod. It would have been so appropriate if it had been, and I wish I'd thought of doing that myself, but it is in fact a curtain rod with decorative ends from John Lewis in Bristol! The two plates in the top ring were made engineers in the sheet metal workshop at RNAS Yeovilton (HMS Heron) and engraved with the crests of HMS Heron and the Naval Chaplaincy Service.

*Credit to: Tina Cullen Salisbury Branch*

Please note that all submissions for the next edition should reach Jane via email, [CEGVMedia@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVMedia@gmail.com) no later than the date here:



How should you do this.... Submissions for all editions of The Virger should reach me before the set deadline. If they miss this date, they may be held over to the next edition. All articles should be sent in MS Word files only and photographs in JPEG format. Please attach text and image files separately in one email.

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# FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN



**W**ell, I would like to say that the better weather is on the way, but sadly, as I write this letter it is raining so hard, I am half expecting a visit from Noah and his Ark. Gardeners will say that it is good for our plants, I guess they are right, and it does save me getting out the hosepipe. You will see from the photograph that my pots have bloomed, but the snow in mid April didn't help some of them.

The news is now full of how we are coming out of the pandemic lockdown and like Spring, we are all looking forward to returning to some sort of normality in our lives. By the Summer, a large number of adults will have received the double vaccination against Covid – 19 and travelling will be permitted.

With that in mind, you will recall that we sent out a questionnaire asking if we should hold our Annual Training Conference and Retreat, detailed information will be found later in this edition of the Virger Magazine. It was discussed at a Zoom meeting of

the Executive Committee who made the final decision. Numbers might be slightly reduced, but it was felt that meeting up with friendly faces would give a huge boost to everyone. Regrettably, due to date changes and other pressures, our two Festivals had to be postponed for this year.

The conference this year, will the opportunity to formally say farewell to Canon Maureen and also to commission Rev'd Rosemary into the role of National Chaplain. We are fortunate that all the speakers who were booked for 2020 will be able to join us in August. We have been in touch with the conference centre, and they have outlined all the necessary Covid regulations that they have introduced. There might also be the need to tweak our programme and seating arrangements in the meeting rooms and church, but we will be as sensitive as we can to meet everyone's needs. Being with all our friends and colleagues will, I am sure, give everyone a huge and much needed psychological boost.

If you have not booked your place, please do so as soon as you can by contacting Margaret Burston and completing a booking form. It would be helpful to know numbers as soon as we can. I am so looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible in such a wonderful setting at West Malvern.

**John Kirby-Shearer**  
**Chairman**



# FROM THE DESK OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN



It is perhaps too soon to say that the pandemic that has challenged every area of our lives is completely behind us. At the time of writing, we do not know for sure whether the Guild will be gathering at Conference in Malvern. The immediate threat of Covid-19 seems to be lifted at home, but the pandemic is raging in other parts of the world without access to vaccines and oxygen.

Living in turbulent times, John Henry Newman, a 19th Century Anglican Priest turned Roman Catholic and Cardinal, preached that God's presence is not always seen when it is upon us, but afterwards, when we look back upon what has gone before. Recalling Jacob wrestling with God beside the Jabbok, he described how we, like Jacob, come, 'in the dark and lie down with a stone for our pillow; but when we rise again, and call to mind what has passed, we recollect we have seen a vision of angels.' (Parochial and Plain Sermons, Vol IV, Sermon 16).



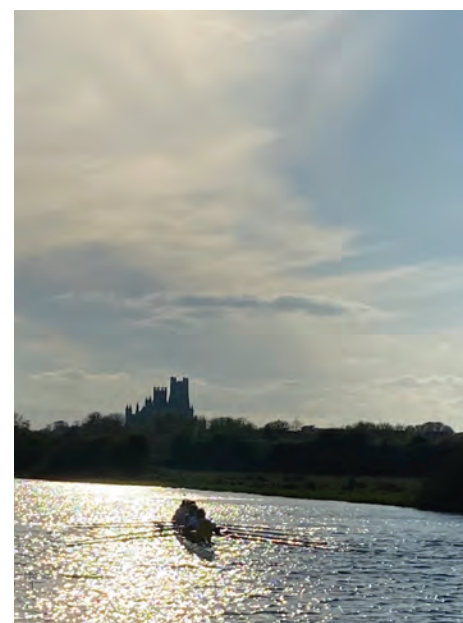
In the midst all the sadness and mourning, can we look back with faith and discern the hand of God in all things? I thought so, on the morning of Prince Philip's funeral in April. The appointed psalm opened with the words, 'How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!' (Psalm 84). It is of course, the Vergers' psalm often heard in the words of Brahms' Requiem at funerals.

Full of hope for healing, the psalmist moves the listener from a state of anxiety to comfort. Warnings about the ungodly are overwhelmed by praise and acclamation, bringing in references to birds, Spring, rain and sun, that connect our mortal bodies with the heavenly kingdom in joyful blessing.



It may be tempting to think that the dwelling place of God is indoors, in our beloved church buildings. Not so. The light that pours in through stained glass and crevices comes from outside. The accompanying photo shows Ely Cathedral in the background, and in the foreground, a rowing boat idling in the

River Great Ouse before coming into land. Summer is a time to discover that the beauty of holiness is not only in the echo of vergers' footsteps on stone, the rustle of cassocks, the smell of candlewax, hushed and reverent voices and choirs singing in harmony. In truth, everything of beauty is a manifestation of God's love.



After a difficult year, we all are in need of rest and healing. We may need reminding collectively that we are worth more than any number of sparrows (Luke 12:7). It could be we need a little nudging to seek out enjoyment, to restore the threads that make up our community. In this vale of tears, I pray that our faith and communal life will be refreshed and renewed through glimpses of God's glory, connecting us with our Saviour, who watches over us all.

**Mthr Rosemary**

*Note: Fragments of Flemish stained glass are from the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Clifton Hampden, Oxfordshire.*



# ANNUAL RETREAT AND TRAINING CONFERENCE

## Monday 9 – Thursday 12 August 2021



**A**s you will read in this magazine, and if all the jungle drums are working well, we hope that you have heard that we seem to be going ahead! We are planning for our Annual Retreat and Conference to take place in West Malvern.

After so long not seeing our friends from across the country (and further) it will be wonderful to see the return of so many familiar faces – and be able to welcome new ones. If you have learned to spot smiling eyes above masks, this will further enhance that gift.

We have been working very closely with the Elim Conference Centre to see what will be possible and to see what safety protocols they have in place. From our perspective, it all looks very good.

Some things have changed. The Parish Church has gone and got a brand new Vicar (some of you may know the song by Richard Stilgoe, and remember it being performed at a Conference Review many years ago), this one is not named Ken and they don't want the hymns sung quicker. They are still very keen to welcome us, and it is always a delight to work with a Church so that our services are outward-facing.

If you haven't been to Conference before, then please do think about it – the Guild stands on six points:

Fellowship — Communication – Support – Advice – Training – Welfare

With meetings, friendship, and so much more, Conference covers all of this.

The Conference Centre is set in the beautiful surroundings of the Malvern Hills, where there are some idyllic walks to be had, or plenty of places to just sit and enjoy the views.

The cost is felt to be very reasonable for a fully inclusive stay, with en-suite rooms with large double beds and food that is beautifully prepared (including meeting all dietary needs that may be required). However, please do not let the cost put you off. If you wish to apply for a bursary these are always available. Do give the National Chaplain a call and she will be able to talk through the options.

**It will be wonderful to welcome you – please book up...**

## OVERSEAS UPDATE

**L**ock down lifts, restrictions ease and the world opens its wide doors of welcome and as that happens, slowly, surely and with hope I am delighted to welcome four new overseas members to the Guild:

**Daniel Jack**, Verger of St Nicholas Church, Helsinki, Finland; **Thomas Hardy**, Head Verger of St Andrew's Cathedral, Jackson, Mississippi, USA; **Craig Copley Brown**, Dean's Verger of St Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, Ireland; and **Crissy Ariineitwe**, Verger & Custodian of St Frances Chapel of the University of Makarere, Kampala, Uganda.

A warm welcome to all four vergers from four very different locations. We look

forward to getting to know them as their membership of and to the CEGV develops. In the spirit of development I am investigating the possibility of 'Overseas Zoom Meetings', an exciting project, hopefully enriching fellowship across the world. Overseas members - if you are interested in joining in this pioneering experiment please register your interest and email address with me at [cegvoverseas@gmail.com](mailto:cegvoverseas@gmail.com) and we will see how the spirit moves. It will be interesting dealing with the myriad of time zones - but we are up to a challenge.

Yours and His

**John G Campbell**  
Overseas Membership Office



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## BLACKBURN BRANCH



On Tuesday 23rd March a service of Prayer and Reflection was held at Blackburn Cathedral to remember the 4108 persons in Lancashire who had sadly passed away with the dreadful Corona Virus Pandemic.

We remembered the first date of lockdown by holding a special service at Blackburn Cathedral and by lighting over 4,000 tea light candles, placed in patterns on the nave floor.

Mark Pickering (who is Head Verger) and I, two office staff and the Canon Precentor, had all worked together on the previous Sunday following the "Covid Lead" Eucharist to be ready for the Tuesday (The Cathedral is presently closed on Mondays).

On Tuesday a short service was held at 10am with representatives from the NHS (who are using the vast crypt as a vaccination centre), Civic members and members of the public. The High Sheriff of Lancaster lit the first "pavement" candle from the Paschal Candle, we then began to light the 4000+ candles on the nave floor. Mark, Rachael (another verger) and I worked tirelessly with the mammoth task. We also had many photographers from the media following us around.

At twelve noon we held a one minute silence and the bell was tolled in memory of those deceased. Prayers were said on the hour during the day. We had many visitors throughout the day and we had to keep the candles lit until 7pm as the BBC News Presenter and the crew came to host the 6.30 news report from the Cathedral,

"Oh my knees". There was a picture of me on BBC News Website lighting the many candles, with local newspaper coverage of Mark, Rachael and me. Mark and I were duty from 9am until 7.30pm, a long hard day to carry out our commitments.

On the Wednesday following, I spent the day "taking the tablets for my aching knees"...

Dear Lord if you were there in the Cathedral, "PLEASE CAN I HAVE SOME NEW KNEES?".

**Tony Hales**  
**Volunteer verger -**  
**Blackburn Cathedral**  
**Blackburn, Manchester & Chester**



## LEICESTER & PETERBOROUGH WITH DERBY BRANCH NEWS

### Diamond Wedding Anniversary

Congratulations to William and Pauline Haynes who celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on June 10th.

Pauline Haynes is to retire as verger of Holy Trinity Barrow and we welcome Marion Worrall who will be admitted at the branch meeting in Monday 27th September.

Due to Lockdown and COVID restrictions we are still trying to arrange services to admit new vergers at Peterborough and Derby Cathedrals

### Branch meetings:

We resume our 2021 calendar as follows:

Tuesday 29th June: 7.30pm Evening Prayer at St Phillip's and St James' Groby

Monday 26th July: TBC

Monday 23rd August: 4-6pm

Afternoon Tea Party at the home of Les Mitchelmore - If you fancy a day out in Leicester and want to join us for tea, you are most welcome. Contact Les - [les.mitchelmore@gmail.com](mailto:les.mitchelmore@gmail.com)

Monday 27th September at Holy Trinity Barrow on Soar.

**Les Mitchelmore**  
Branch Correspondent

## ST ALBANS BRANCH NEWS

### What a difference a year makes!

This year 2021, the St Albans branch members were able to meet in person in a socially distanced way for their Corporate Communion service at St Saviour's church St Albans. This marked a delayed start to the programme for 2021 as Lenten Devotions had to be cancelled due to Lockdown and our venue, St Saviour's was being utilised

as an additional Chapel of Rest. A few members attended the service where we took part in a robed procession in single file and a simple Communion service. No refreshments were served afterwards which were sorely missed by those who took part, so no social chat took place. However, this was far better than last year when we had a virtual service due to the 2020 Lockdown. On a happier note, we were able to admit our

newest member, Jenny Huskisson from All Saints Leighton Buzzard, to the Guild.

Our programme will continue with our Alban Supper in June after restrictions are lifted (we hope) and we intend to hold a Thanksgiving service in October.

**Rosamund Russell**  
Branch Correspondent





## YORK BRANCH

It was good to see branch members again at the Branch AGM on the 15th February, which took place via Zoom (details were published in the previous issue of Virger). As we continue to emerge from lockdown we have not, as yet, been able to meet in person, but here's hoping that it can happen soon.

Here at Sheffield Cathedral, there have been some changes to the Vergers' department. On Easter Sunday we bade farewell to our Canons' Verger, Paul Russell-Sewell, who has moved to become Head Verger at the Cathedral Church of St. Nicholas in Newcastle. He had been at Sheffield for 13 years and moves to Newcastle at an exciting time as they are coming to the end of some internal works as part of their "Common Ground, Sacred Space" project (similar to the Sheffield Cathedral "Gateway"

project of 2012 – 2014, aimed at renewing aspects of the building to make it more accessible to visitors).

Candidates for the vacant position were interviewed on the 22nd April (including myself), and the successful candidate, Richard Crow, will begin his new job on Spring Bank Holiday Monday (31st May). Although I was unsuccessful in obtaining promotion, it was not a total loss. Not only have I been offered training to help me for any future positions that may crop up, the Cathedral have decided to invest in my knowledge and expertise in liturgy by making me Verger for Liturgy (the actual job title and description are, at the time of writing, still in the process of being worked out). Although it is not a promotion up the ladder, it is a sideways move. I will still be number 3 in the department, but I will now have more

responsibilities, predominantly in the Sacristy, and with the day to day worship of the Cathedral.

I have, since mid April, returned to full time hours which, after more than a year of furlough and part furlough/part time hours, has taken some getting used to. I have not, as yet, returned to ceremonial duties, although with some verging coming back into some major services hopefully it won't be too long before that can happen. From week commencing the 17th May the Cathedral will be open to visitors Monday to Saturday 9 – 5, and 11.30 – 3 on Sundays. The Gift Shop will be open Monday to Saturday 10 – 2, and the 1554 Coffee Shop will be open Monday to Saturday 10 – 2.30.

**Ben Elliott-Hill**

# FOR YOUR DIARY MEMBERS

## Monday 9 – Thursday 12 August 2021

Annual Training Conference Elim Conference Centre, West Malvern. Anyone wishing to come should contact Margaret Burston on [CEGVConference@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVConference@gmail.com)

We are pleased that, subject to further restrictions, we have booked next year's conference and we look forward to welcoming you to this annual meeting.

If your Branch has any events that you wish to have advertised on this page please contact the Communications Officer [CEGVMedia@gmail.com](mailto:CEGVMedia@gmail.com)

# A FEW RANDOM THOUGHTS OF A RETIRED VERGER/SACRISTAN



I recently retired as verger / sacristan of St Peter's Church; not after a lifetime of service but after enough time to have gained a wide insight into life 'behind the scenes' and a deeper understanding of the inner workings of the church, the liturgy and the clergy. What an interesting experience.

Now I can look back and enjoy many happy memories, and reflect on what was once, for me, the dark and mysterious world of church vergers.

Many people might still remember one of my predecessors at St Peter's, Richard Duke. Richard was verger there for hundreds of years (or so it seemed). He was a big man in every respect and with a countenance which un-nerved some people, but he was a kindly man, dedicated and knowledgeable in the extreme.

At his funeral St Peter's was packed, and the incumbent Rector- Rev Robin Johnson (yes the Rector was based at St Peter's in those days) - commenced his tribute to Richard this way.

Robin said he was standing on the pavement outside the South door of St Peter's a few days after Richard's death, when a man approached him and said "I understand your verger has died?" Robin confirmed that sadly, that was the case. Don't worry, said the man, look on the bright side. You can have your church back now.

We thought that was an odd comment to make but we sniggered politely and the address continued.

On reflection I now realise that the man on the pavement was right in what he said, and it was quite in order for Robin to mention it.

That brief exchange summed up much of what we vergers are about. We are entrusted to care for some of the most important buildings in the land and we tend to take those duties very seriously. This responsibility is much more than just a job of work, for many it soon becomes a way of life and the church becomes 'theirs'.

Rumour has it that some individuals are, or have been, somewhat dictatorial and dogmatic over the way things are done in 'their' church. If that is the case, it is only their attempt to ensure high standards and to have everything correct and 'just right', always based, of course, on a sound understanding of church law (Canon Law), church tradition and the needs of the congregations.

The office of verger is an ancient one, and has its beginnings in the earliest days of the Christian Church. The rewards of being a verger are many, not in financial terms I hasten to add, but in terms of great pride and satisfaction to have been entrusted to care for such valuable buildings, and their priceless artefacts. However the greatest reward of all is the privilege of working in very close partnership with the clergy on all aspects of church life. That is a privilege indeed. It is perhaps one that few others of the laity ever experience.

The verger is often the first person a member of the public might meet on



entering a church. A few of those visitors might be in some type of distress, perhaps looking for reassurance and help, or perhaps just a sympathetic ear. Others are keen to learn more about the ancient building and the great history surrounding it. The verger must be well informed and ready to help.

Then there is the satisfaction of developing a deep knowledge of the liturgy and the intricate workings of the church calendar; to have the church prepared and absolutely ready for the priest to preside and then to assist in the running of those Services so that perfect and reverent worship is provided at all times.

Vergers are unique to the Church of England - and to some Anglican churches in the USA - but surprisingly, not one verger is employed by the Church of England. All are employed individually by each church on whatever terms suits that post, and the duties and responsibilities vary enormously.

Both men and women are employed in equal status, and fall into two categories.

First, there are the professional, career vergers. These good folks work and reside in our great cathedrals and major parish churches in full time employment, with all normal working conditions and expectations. Housing is normally provided.

The remainder of our churches are looked after by part time volunteer vergers, or those in receipt of small honorariums. Many are in retirement from other walks of life.

There is no animosity between the two groups. All intermingle and all are eligible to undertake the three or four year study course with a view to obtaining the professional qualification of "The Diploma of the Church of England Guild of Vergers", which covers a very wide range of practical, liturgical and legal duties and responsibilities.

The duties of vergers today are an amalgam of tasks, which in the distant past, would have been carried out by a range of people such as the lamplighter, sacristan, doorkeeper, clerk, beadle, constable, altarist, sexton and protector of the Priest. The verge, (virge, wand, rod or staff), is the stick carried in procession by the verger. Now merely symbolic, it was formerly put to good use clearing a path for the priest and protecting him from the hordes. I never had cause to use my verge in earnest. I have obviously missed out on a great deal of excitement.

And what a blessing St Peter's no longer needs a sexton! Digging graves can be very back breaking. Thankfully for all vergers, that duty has evolved into a new profession for mechanised experts. Some churches no longer have a place for a verger, those duties very often being

shared among the congregation and clergy or not done at all. The worship in those churches can often be more informal, and that suits many. It is right and good that everyone is catered for.

But for many people the formal, structured Service is still preferred, and I have come to hold those traditions and the ancient office of verger in very high regard. I am so glad I volunteered and played my small part.

Anyone with a Christian belief, a compassion for others, and a need to be of service to their "fellow men" would undoubtedly find this calling as deeply rewarding as I did.

**David Guy, Retired Verger of St Peter's Church, Dorchester, Salisbury Branch member**



# OUT OF THE DARK

*Nor is anything concealed that won't be made known and brought to the light...*

(Luke 8:17)



**T**he Apostle's words had an interesting connotation recently when an extraordinary discovery was made in St John the Baptist Church in Burford.

Last December saw the completion of work on a new lighting system and the final fixtures were being tested in the tower crossing. Concealed in the arcades for centuries and revealed in all its ancient glory was a Medieval bestiary.

We were astonished by the carved stone arch of beaked creatures: rabbit, pig, elephant, wolf, to name a few, hidden in the dark for centuries. But even more curious was the exquisite, detailed carving of a cephalopod. We've had bats in the belfry, but never an octopus. On closer scrutiny, it is possible to make out the prominent head and suckered tentacles, with the bizarre addition of a pair of flippers.

There has of course been some discussion since on how this Mediterranean curiosity found itself in Medieval England at the Gateway to the Cotswolds. We know early stone masons would have worked from oral descriptions or crude drawings brought back by merchants from the profitable trade links with the Middle East, particularly after the First Crusade of 1096. We are currently researching the possibility of a link with the Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture. Potentially the carvings could predate St John the Baptist Church - 1175 - and would have been utilised in an earlier church - first quarter of the 12th Century - that was never finished, and the fabric reused when it was scrapped and started again.

Investigations are still ongoing, but we are looking forward to further enlightenment (excuse the pun) on this cephalopodic conundrum.

Grace and peace to you all,

**Lynnette Derry, (Branch Member and Verger of St John the Baptist Church, Burford, Oxon)**

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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

Prayers for our Vergers during this time of half-open churches, for those who feel alone, are furloughed, redundant or struggling in new, unfamiliar and uncertain times.

### Somerset & Avon

Marek Barden  
Mary Holway  
Roger Lawrence  
Trevor Llewellyn

### York Branch

George Cook

### St Albans Branch

Peter Hudson

### East Anglia Branch

Val Pizzey

### Blackburn, Chester & Manchester Branch

Patricia Platt  
Margaret Scott

### Oxford Branch

Gerry and Hazel Knight

**And all people facing hardship and difficulties and who are facing uncertainties.**

**And everyone not specifically mentioned who needs the love, counsel and grace of our Lord.**



# MISS MARGARET ROSE STEADMAN

**T**he Leicester, Peterborough with Derby branch is very sad to record the recent death of our dear friend, Miss Margaret Rose Steadman.

Margaret was born in Stourport, Worcestershire on 15th July 1931. The family moved to Barrow on Soar, Leicestershire in 1945. Margaret started work at a local hosiery factory in 1954 and after working there for many years - she received a mantle clock in 1975 to mark 25yrs service. Margaret finished work to give her time to looking after her mother until 1987 when she became the local post lady.

Holy Trinity Church, Barrow was a major part of her life and faith. Margaret joined the congregation when she was sixteen in 1947, eventually leading the Sunday School for 25 years. She then moved on to be the Verger - a position Margaret again held for 25yrs. During this time she, along with Pauline Haynes, her co-verger, enjoyed attending many festivals including the Guild's 75th Anniversary at St Paul's Cathedral - enjoying Champagne in the Crypt. The activities of the Guild and especially the Leicester branch gave her great fellowship and Margaret was a very valued member right up to lockdown. Margaret was admitted to hospital earlier in the year and died peacefully. Members of the branch are very saddened that due to Covid restrictions they were unable to attend the funeral at Holy Trinity but are pleased to know that Pauline was able to place the Verge on Margaret's coffin.

As you have read, Margaret was a very committed person in all the aspects of her life and gave great service over the years.

Those who knew and loved her were very pleased when in 2017 Margaret was honoured for her service to the Church and her community by being nominated to receive the Sovereign's gift of a Royal Maundy purse.

2017 was Leicester Cathedral's turn to host the Maundy Ceremony, this being the last Cathedral on the list. This service was to be His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh's last official royal duty as he was to retire from public Royal duties later that month and all future Maundy Services are to be held at St George's Chapel, in Windsor Castle.



Margaret was a fan of Leicester City Football Team and while in hospital managed to watch the game against Man Utd.

She was keen to discuss it with her family when they visited the next day. As we go to press she will be rejoicing that her team have won the FA Cup 1-0 against Chelsea.

*Well done thou good and faithful servant.*

*We give thanks for her life, love and service and pray God's eternal blessing on her soul.*

May she rest in peace and rise in glory  
Amen





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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**D**uring the last meeting of the Executive Committee we discussed an item of business regarding Branch Chaplains & Honorary Branch Members. We noted that not all Branches were dealing in the same way with these persons and that some Branches were not paying the National Capitation for Branch Chaplains or for those members who the Branch wished to keep on their books as Honorary Members (this is not relating to Honorary Branch Life Members) and that there was an expectation that these persons should be in receipt of Membership cards.

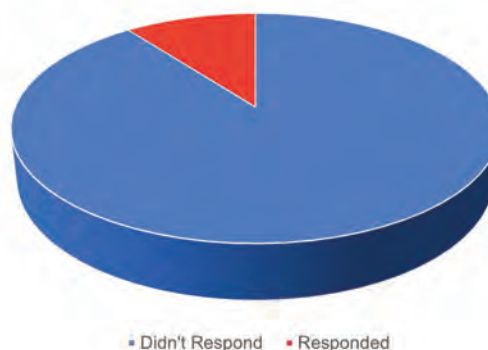
Your Regional Representatives reported to the current situation within each of their Branches.

It was agreed by all present that the following was how these two categories should be addressed:

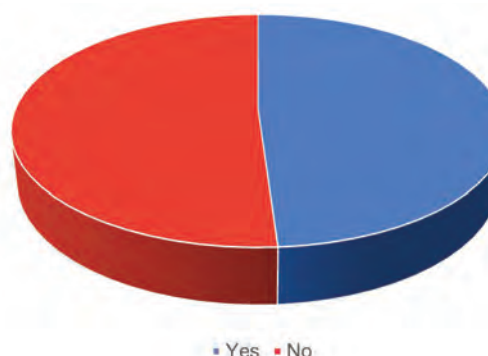
- **Honorary Branch Members** – it is felt that should a Branch wish to have these members, be it for pastoral or other reasons, and no capitation is paid, this is permissible. However, as this level of membership is not within the Constitution then no Membership Card will be issued as this is purely a Branch Matter.
- **Branch Chaplains** – As this position is listed within the Constitution and Statutes then these should be members of the Guild. It was felt that the Branch should cover the cost of the National Capitation and Magazine. As members they would then be issued with a Membership Card. In most circumstances the role of a Chaplain would be an Associate Member of the Guild.
- **Reporting on Annual Returns** – Branch Chaplains should be listed within the numbers relating to their membership status, Honorary Branch Member(s) need not be listed in the returns nor address supplied to the Executive.

The main other area of discussion related to the Questionnaires that were sent to each of you. We were sorry to have only received replies from about 10% of our members. The following graphs detail how you answered the relating questions. (As a decision that no Festivals would take place in 2021 was made after the questionnaire being formulated we have not included the data here.)

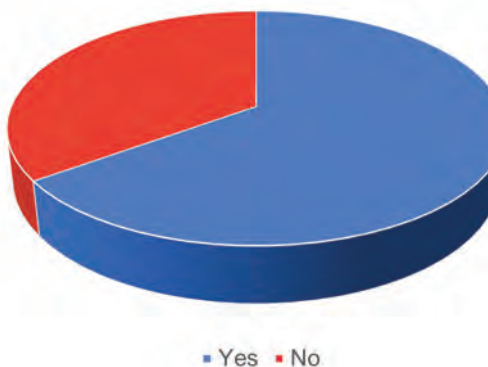
Who responded?



Of those who responded. Have you attended a Conference within the last 3 years?

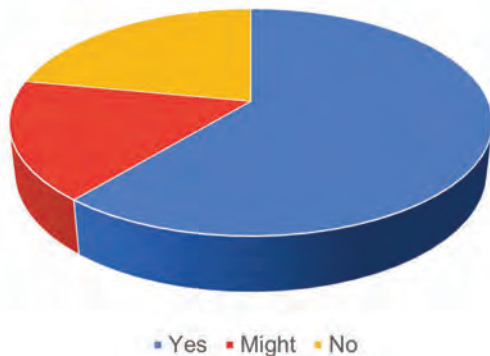


Of the responses from those who **have** previously attended. Should Conference go ahead?

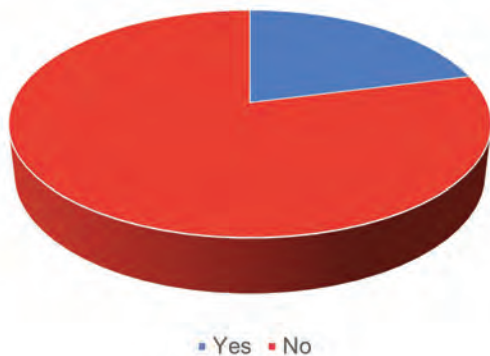




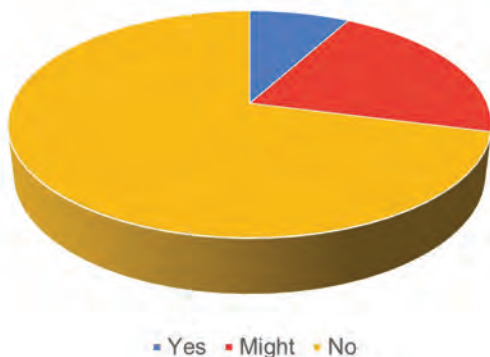
Of the responses from those who **have** previously attended. If Conference went ahead would they attend?



Of the responses from those who have **not** previously attended. Should the Conference go ahead?



Of the responses from those who have **not** previously attended. If Conference went ahead would they attend?



Some of the comments that were included in your returns were:

- Too long has elapsed without in person meetings, we will lose our sense of fellowship, and it gets me out of the house

- We need to see what the transport situation is. Trains etc.
- I would only attend conference on the basis that cases are down and if I have had been vaccinated. I know a lot of members would have been by then so would be slightly safer for them.
- I cannot see things being back to a real normal this summer and if any event still requires full masking and social distancing then I shall not want to attend I think as I find meaningful worship and interaction very difficult in such circumstances. To avoid uncertainties I would recommend delaying into 2022 but perhaps I'm too cautious!
- As long as we obey the restrictions, wear masks and hand wash if still required, we should be safe to go ahead with our meetings.
- Although I have said 'No' to postponing Conference this is in the hope that the Government road map is able to go ahead as planned and the third wave doesn't cause problems.

We wish to thank all those who took the time to complete the questionnaires and return them to us.

We have had extensive conversations with the Conference Centre and the Parish Church to see if and how we might be able to attend Conference, should it go ahead. The Conference Centre has put a number of policies and infrastructures in place to ensure that they are 'Covid secure'.

Following a long discussion at the Executive Committee we discussed the pros and cons of the Conference happening this year. It was felt by many in the meeting that even if we were a smaller group this year, it would be good to start moving towards a life that was post-Covid, as best as we can. We are mindful that by the time August comes around hopefully all adults will have been offered their first vaccine and many of us will have received both.

Of course we cannot predict what the next months will bring, but we are mindful that the want of so many just to be able to interact with friends is an overwhelming aim for us, even in private life.

It was therefore agreed by the meeting that we would plan for Conference to happen in 2021, and we would commend to you the booking form enclosed in the magazine. Should anything change this and the country's road map, then we will, as always, reassess as needed.



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## The Guild Prayer

Almighty Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named,  
who has called us into the fellowship of your Church,  
grant, we pray, that in all our churches we may fulfil the duties  
and enjoy the privileges of our spiritual home.  
And on those who offer themselves for service as vergers in the house of God  
bestow the fullness of your grace,  
that, united in love to you and to one another,  
we may show forth your glory and hasten the coming of your kingdom.  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



[www.cofegv.org.uk](http://www.cofegv.org.uk)

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