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CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN



The Journal of the
Librarians' Christian Fellowship

CONTENTS INCLUDE

- **SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2008: ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE
AND WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL LIBRARY VISIT**
 - **JESUS AND LEADERSHIP**
 - **PUTTING EVERYTHING INTO PERSPECTIVE**
 - **PRESERVING THE PAST IN BERMONDSEY**
 - **NON-CONFORMIST CHURCH RECORDS:
HOW TO TRACE YOUR CHRISTIAN ANCESTORS**
 - **INNS OFFER ROOM TO JESUS**
 - **IT'S A SIGN!**

EVENTS AT A GLANCE

●TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2008: VISIT TO BIBLE SOCIETY, SWINDON.

A chance to see behind the scenes and meet some of the staff of this leading Christian organisation. Details: p. 11.

●SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2008: ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

United Church, Winchester, from 2.30.p.m. **Paul Valler**, Associate Speaker, *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity*, on "Get A Life: Winning Choices For Working People". Preceded by morning visit to *Winchester Cathedral* Library. Details: p. 8.

●SATURDAY 25 APRIL 2009: ANNUAL CONFERENCE

To be held at St. Nicholas' Church, Maid Marian Way, Nottingham, from 10.30.a.m. Speakers include LCF member Rev. **Rhona Floate**. Details: p. 12.

●TUESDAY 14 JULY 2009: SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING

De Havilland Campus, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield. Guest speaker: Rev. **David Ronco**. Details: p. 12.

PRAYER NOTES FOR AUTUMN 2008

PLEASE PRAY FOR

●LCF meetings and activities planned for 2008 and 2009, especially the visit to the *Bible Society* and the *Annual Public Lecture* on 18 October 2008.

●The work of LCF's executive committee. Pray that candidates will be found to fill any positions that may become vacant at next April's Annual General Meeting.

●LCF's attempts at recruiting new members and raising our profile in the library and information professions – for example our new group on *Facebook*.

●A positive response to the availability of material from *Christian Librarian* on the databases of *EBSCO Publishing*.

●The work of the *Church of England Record Centre*.

●The ministry of the *Westminster Central Hall* and the work of **Richard Ratcliffe** as Archivist there.

●The various evangelistic initiatives mentioned by **Jeff Bonser** in this issue.

●The ministry of **Adrian Plass** and his wife **Bridget**.



LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

CHRISTIANS IN LIBRARY, INFORMATION AND ARCHIVE WORK

*An organisation 'in liaison' with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.
Affiliated to: Christian Research Association; Christians at Work; Evangelical Alliance; Transform Work
UK; Universities' & Colleges' Christian Fellowship.
Web Site: www.librarianscf.org.uk*

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SELECTED CONTENTS

04:Gordon Harris: Jesus and Leadership

06:Louise Manners: Putting Everything Into Perspective

15:Graham Hedges: Preserving the Past in Bermondsey

17:Anne MacRitchie: A Library in Stone

20:Richard Ratcliffe: Non-Conformist Records

34:Jeff Bonser: Inns Offer Room to Jesus

45:Adrian Plass: It's A Sign!

THE FIRST WORD

GORDON HARRIS welcomes a new book which is equally applicable to the library and information professions and the mission of the contemporary Church

JESUS AND LEADERSHIP



At the present time, if Christians in the UK need anything, they need strong leaders who know God's heart and who unite disciples without compromise.

Introducing this new book* on leadership, Graham Cray, Bishop of Maidstone, emphasises that the evangelisation of the West does not depend on fresh expressions of church alone, but on authentic discipleship, the belief that Jesus knows better than we do how to live our lives.

The author, Andrew Watson, in his search for the characteristics of Christian leadership, is struck by Paul. Paul did not say "*Don't follow me – follow Jesus*", but instead encouraged the Corinthian church with "*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ*" (1 Cor. 11.1). Watson himself yearned for something more than secular models of leadership with its Drucker,

Myers-Briggs and Strengthsfinder. He also felt the tension between activism and contemplation in Christian leadership, realising that Jesus invited the disciples both to spend time with him, and also to send them out to minister (Mk. 3.14-15). In this connection we in LCF may do well to note the poverty of measurable activism as against the “Tent of Meeting” - and Jesus’ chilling words “*I never knew you*” (see pages 52-56).

But Jesus himself never spoke of leadership, indeed was suspicious of those aspiring to power (Mk. 10.42-43), but he developed people to lead his church. He affirmed the disciples’ recognition of his lordship (Jn 13.13) but his role was that of obedient suffering servant (Mt. 12.18, Heb. 5.8). Watson concludes therefore that Jesus’ leadership was formed from his own discipleship and servanthood.

The author divides Jesus’ leadership into four facets: Come, Follow, Wait and Go.

Part 1 *Come to Me*

Jesus is not choosy about who comes to him. As a leader he is relational rather than exalted in mystique, and is a shepherd displaying compassion, humility, a peaceable spirit (see pages 35-38) and vulnerability. Similarly the invitation “*Come*” also includes the need to invite those outside the seductively cosy Christian community. See LCF’s Aim No. .2 <http://www.librarianscf.org.uk/about/aims.html>

Part 2 *Follow Me*

Andrew Watson faces the West’s difficulty in accepting authority in a post-modern age where there is general mistrust and cynicism of managers and leaders. Indeed, Jesus encouraged a mistrust of hypocritical leaders (Mt. 23.2-3). He himself is described as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12.1-2) – surely one who attracts followers because he *inspires* them. Such inspiration, Watson argues, stems from authority, integrity, insight and self-sacrifice. On the latter, he doesn’t pull his punches: the decision to

follow Christ inevitably leads to conflict with the world and its values, to persecution or hardship, and he champions Bonhoeffer's rejection of "*cheap grace*" insidiously weakening the church in the West.

Part 3 *Wait for Me*

Watson examines the time management of Jesus. Obviously unhassled by Peter's reproachful "*Everyone is looking for you!*" (Mk. 1.36), Jesus is more like a farmer waiting for his crops to mature, more like Simeon who waited and waited. Here Watson alludes to his grandparents, missionaries in China before World War 2. They patiently worked between 1924 and 1939 with modest achievements, but they would hardly recognize the church now which has mushroomed from their small beginnings.

Part 4 *Go for Me*

The final facet of Jesus' leadership style, "Go for Me" is illustrated by the amazingly simple image of him placing one hand on our shoulder and pointing forward with the other hand. Andrew analyses the characters in the Gospels who were sent by Jesus: Legion (who wanted to cling to him), the woman who was nearly stoned for adultery, the disciples (Lk. 9) – and us! (Mt. 28.19-20, Acts 1.8)

Readable but challenging, this book deserves study by anyone charged to lead knowledge and information services, and also in the church, in a community or a family.

* WATSON, Andrew. ***The fourfold leadership of Jesus***. Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008. 191 pages.

Gordon A. Harris, *BSocSc, MPhil, FCLIP, DipKM*, is President of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* and works as Senior Corporate Information Officer for *Tearfund*.

THE SECOND WORD

LOUISE MANNERS looks at some current concerns that affect us as Christians and as librarians

PUTTING EVERYTHING INTO PERSPECTIVE

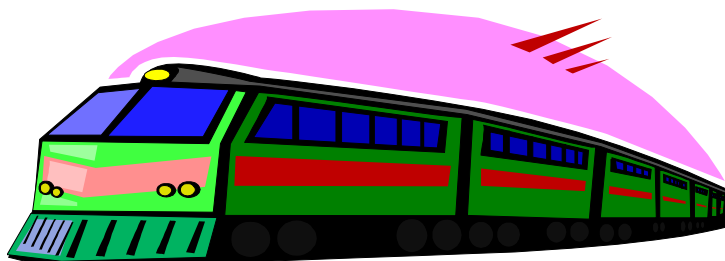


With the credit crunch in the year to come churches are likely to petition their congregations for increased financial contributions as increased heating and transport costs are faced. Church fund-raising campaigns quite possibly will be more lengthy as it becomes more difficult to raise money. On the library front there is concern about censorship with university worker in Nottingham Hicham Yezza facing deportation under the ***Terrorism Act*** for printing out a training manual from a U.S. Government web-site. Islington Council paying out in a tribunal decision over treatment of Christian registrar Lillian Ladele could mean that employers become reluctant to employ people of faith. The Olympics in China this year have not been welcomed by Chinese Brother Yun who, speaking at the *Christian Resources Exhibition*, considered them a distraction from the Christian message. However the LCF annual lecture in Winchester will help us achieve a work/life balance and put everything into perspective!

Louise Manners, *DipLib, MA, MCLIP*, was elected as Chair of the Executive committee of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship at the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 19 April 2008.

NEWS

SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2008
MAKE TRACKS AND JOIN US FOR
LCF's INVASION OF WINCHESTER



11.00.a.m. - 12.00.p.m.

VISIT TO WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL LIBRARY

12.15.p.m. - 2.00.p.m.

LUNCH

2.30.p.m. - 4.45.p.m.

LCF ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE
in the United Church, Jewry Street, Winchester

PAUL VALLER

*Associate Speaker, London Institute for Contemporary
Christianity*

**“Get A Life – Winning Choices for
Working People”**

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Get A Life – Winning Choices for Working People is the theme of the Annual Public Lecture of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship which is to be held on **Saturday 18 October 2008** at the **United Church, Jewry Street, Winchester**, from 2.30. - 4.45. p.m. Our distinguished guest speaker is to be **Paul Valler**, an Associate Speaker from the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity*. The lecture will be of interest to a wide audience – not only librarians – and all are welcome. Admission is free and there is no need to book in advance.

Long working hours, travel and ever evolving gadgets connecting us to an always-on world leave many people sapped of energy and far too tired. Families and friends often get the dregs of lives worn out by work. Based on first hand experience of a pressurised life, Paul Valler's lecture will dig deep to uncover the root cause of our work/life balance problems and show how gaining a strong identity and clear purpose enables us to make winning choices.

Paul Valler is the former Finance Director of the major computer company *Hewlett-Packard Limited* and has also served as European General Manager for Hewlett Packard's European Leasing Business. He was the founding Director of the Hewlett-Packard International Bank in Dublin.

Paul is a regular conference and seminar speaker on topics such

as Leadership Integrity and Work/Life Integration – inspiring people to make the right choices. He has lectured at *Cambridge University* and *Cranfield Management Centre*. He spoke at the *House of Lords* colloquium on the spiritual and ethical implications of the Internet.

A Teaching Elder at *Finchampstead Baptist Church* with an itinerant preaching ministry, Paul has spoken at the Christian conference *Spring Harvest* on the topic of Faith in the Workplace. In addition to serving as an Associate Speaker for the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, he is an after-dinner speaker on subjects with a wide appeal such as "*Balancing All Life's Pressures*" and "*Job Security in a Global Economy*". His book – also called ***Get A Life – Winning Choices for Working People*** – was published by IVP (Inter-Varsity Press) in March 2008.

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL LIBRARY VISIT

For those who can get to Winchester in time, our day will begin with a visit to the Cathedral Library, beginning 11.00.a.m.

Dating from 1150, this is the oldest cathedral library in Europe that is still being used as a library. Only two hundred books survived the Commonwealth purge, but after the Restoration two thousand volumes were donated by Bishop

Morley, who also left £5.00 for the Librarian!

In the exhibition room, the main item of interest is the famous **Winchester Bible**, dating from the 12th Century and containing many memorable illustrations of biblical characters and events.

This is a rich library with archives dating back over a thousand years and well worth a visit by members and friends of LCF.

WINCHESTER ATTRACTIONS

Those who have visited Winchester Cathedral Library on earlier LCF occasions may be interested in identifying alternative morning attractions in this historic town.

Firstly, of course, there is the **Cathedral** itself, begun by Bishop Walkelin in 1079 and the longest cathedral in England. The novelist Jane Austen is buried here and there is also a striking statue of Joan of Arc.

Our lecture venue in Jewry Street is just a short distance from the recently opened **Winchester Discovery Centre**, "*combining the best of libraries, with an exciting world of learning, leisure, entertainment and fun*".

Winchester's **Great Hall** contains the famous Round Table, now known to have been constructed in the 14th Century, and re-painted in its present form for King Henry VIII, but venerated for

centuries as the original Round Table of King Arthur and his Knights. You can also enjoy a peaceful interlude in the adjacent Queen Eleanor's Gardens.

Just twenty minutes' walk from the centre of Winchester, you will find the **Hospital of St. Cross and Almshouses of Noble Poverty**. Visitors can rest for a while in the Master's Garden, visit the 12th Century church, and explore the monastic buildings that have provided food and shelter for hundreds of years.

LUNCH AND BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS

After the Cathedral Library visit we hope to arrange lunch for members and friends in a nearby restaurant. There is no need to book a place for the afternoon lecture, but we would be grateful if those planning to attend the Library visit or lunch could complete and return the enclosed booking form.

We will then send details of the location of the restaurant and of the arrangements for the morning visit.

TRAVEL

We are hoping for a good attendance, especially from our London, Midlands, Southern, Western and Welsh regions. Please

help us by bringing the arrangements to the attention of friends and colleagues likely to be interested.

Main line fast trains run from London Waterloo (55 minutes), the Midlands, north and south coasts. There are connections from most parts of the country.

There are regular coach services from London, Oxford, Southampton and other centres. For motorists Winchester lies on or near the major southern routes. Park and ride facilities on the outskirts of the city are ideal for visitors approaching from the M3, A34 or A31.

SEE YOU IN WINCHESTER?

You may feel that you are too busy or pressurised to attend a lecture on Work/Life Balance. That might just be a good reason to attend! See you in Winchester?

Please help us to make the lecture arrangements known – for example, by displaying copies of our poster on library and church notice boards. If you can make use of leaflets, please let us know.

Further details of the lecture, the morning visit, and the wider activities of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship, can be obtained from The Secretary: Graham Hedges, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Home telephone 020 8599 1310. Work tel. 020 8871 7467. E mail secretary@librarianscf.org.uk
Web Site www.librarianscf.org.uk

LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER



From The Secretary: Graham Hedges, Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Home tel. 020 8599 1310; Work tel. 020 8871 7467. E mail secretary@librarianscf.org.uk; Web site www.librarianscf.org.uk

VISIT TO BIBLE SOCIETY

This issue may arrive in time to remind you that on **Tuesday 16 September 2008** we are arranging a visit to the headquarters of the **Bible Society at Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon**. This will provide an opportunity to meet some of the staff and hear more about their work in distributing the Bible and encouraging the reading of the Bible in various ways. The formal visit will begin at 2.00. p.m., but a buffet lunch will also be provided at the Bible Society (price £8.50 per head) from 1.00. p.m. for those who can get to Swindon in time.

We hope that members from our London, Southern, and Western regions, in particular, will find it convenient to travel to Swindon. Rail journeys from London Paddington to Swindon, for example, generally take about one hour.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to join the visit to the Bible Society. If you are planning to be present for lunch, please enclose a cheque for the appropriate amount made payable to *Librarians' Christian Fellowship*.

DATES FOR 2009

- Next Year's *Annual Conference* will be held at **St. Nicholas' Church, Nottingham**, on **Saturday 25 April 2009**, from 10.30.a.m. Speakers will include LCF member the Rev. **Rhona Floate**, a former librarian now working as Priest-in-charge of Wool and East Stoke in the Diocese of Salisbury.

- CILIP (*Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals*) will be returning to the **de Havilland campus** of the **University of Hertfordshire**, located at Hatfield, Hertfordshire, for next year's *Umbrella* Conference. Instead of the usual end-of-week timing, this will be held on **Tuesday 14 and Wednesday 15 July 2009**.

We are planning another

Service of Thanksgiving on **Tuesday 14 July 2009**, beginning 5.30.p.m., as our contribution to this major professional gathering. Local Baptist minister, the Rev. **David Ronco**, will be our guest speaker. Please note the date and plan to join us for the service, whether or not you intend to attend the full *Umbrella* conference.

EBSCO PUBLISHING

The Librarians' Christian Fellowship has recently entered into an electronic licensing relationship with *EBSCO Publishing*, a company which describes itself as "*the world's most prolific aggregator of full text journals, magazines and other sources*". The full text of LCF's journal ***Christian Librarian*** will in future be available on EBSCO Publishing's databases. Subscribers will be able to retrieve articles from our publications and the Fellowship will receive a small commission for each article retrieved.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS

- Past LCF speaker **Colin Duriez** is the author of ***Francis Schaeffer: an authentic life*** (IVP, £12.99, ISBN 9781844743100), a new biography of the noted Christian apologist, evangelist and founder of *L'Abri Fellowship*.

- The late **Charles Fraser-Smith** is twice mentioned in Ben MacIntyre's book ***For Your Eyes Only: Ian Fleming and James Bond*** (Bloomsbury, 2008, £20.00, ISBN 978 0 7475 9527 4), published to coincide with a current exhibition at the *Imperial War Museum*. Charles, a former missionary in North Africa, is described as "one of the great *unsung lateral thinkers of the war*".

During the Second World War, he worked for the British government and produced a series of ingenious gadgets for the use of secret agents, saboteurs and escaping prisoners of war. His activities are said to have inspired the character of 'Q' in the James Bond novels and films. In his later years, Charles Fraser-Smith wrote several books about his wartime experiences and became an associate member of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship.

- Following an appeal in an LCF mailing, the late **Brian Louis Pearce** spent several months in 1997 and 1998 as a volunteer librarian at a theological college in Zimbabwe. His time in Zimbabwe inspired a collection of poems which have recently been published under the title ***Voices Spits Silence*** (Magwood, £4.50, ISBN 978 0 946603 21 3). A novel ***Zimbabwe Passage*** is scheduled for publication at a later date. You can order copies of the poetry collection from the publisher at 72 Heathfield South, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW2 7SS.

MAGNIFICENT CASPIAN

The present writer was privileged to attend the UK premiere of ***Prince Caspian***, the second film based on C.S. Lewis's ***Chronicles of Narnia*** series of fantasy novels for children. Described as "*The People's Premiere*", the occasion attracted around 10,000 people to the *O2 Centre* (formerly the Millennium Dome) in Greenwich, London. The organisers claimed that this was the biggest film premiere ever organised in the United Kingdom and that the cinema screen - 91 feet by 38 feet - was the largest ever erected in this country.

The film attracted some good reviews, but there were some dissenting voices. Alex Baker, for example, argued that while Lewis's original books are read and enjoyed by adults and children alike, the books' adult concerns have not translated well to the cinema screen. The reviewer rated the film an improvement on 2005's ***The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*** and said that he was looking forward to the third title in the series, ***The Voyage of the Dawn Treader***, if only because this film offered the prospect of more scenes with the talking mouse, Reepicheep. These comments appeared in the article *Growing Up Slowly* which was included in the ***Baptist Times*** for 19 June 2008, p. 20.

A more positive response came from Jeremy Clarke's review in ***Third Way***, Summer 2008, p. 37: "*Although Caspian has benefitted*

from a bigger budget than *The Lion ...*, more pertinently this second franchise foray feels less a stab at outdoing *Lord of the Rings* or *Potter* than a genuine attempt - and a highly successful one at that - to put Narnia on the screen. In short, magnificent".

CURRENT AWARENESS

- A recent news item in the Christian press reports that "avid readers at a Devon school have received a boost after the town's local churches donated twenty-seven new books."

The Christian books, worth £200, were given to St. Andrew's School by *Churches Together in Cullompton and District* as part of the current *Hope 08* project.

The donation was also part of the national scheme *Speaking Volumes* operated by the *Christian Book Promotion Trust*. The books were formally presented to the school by local Baptist and Methodist ministers.

You can read the full story in *School Library Gets Book Boost as Part of Hope '08* in the ***Baptist Times*** for 31 July 2008, p. 6.

- Mark Craig's article *Telling Tales in School* considers the effectiveness of Sir Cliff Richard's ***Fifty Favourite Bible Stories*** (£14.99, ISBN 978 0 74596063 6), published by Lion Hudson to mark the singer's fiftieth anniversary in the music business. Although Cliff is no

longer a familiar name to many children in the primary school age bracket at which the book is aimed, the book (and accompanying CDs) were well received by several pupils of the *Shellingford Church of England Primary School*, near Faringdon in Oxfordshire. Head Teacher Fiona Craig used the book with the children and described it as "a bright, contemporary way of putting children in touch with the message of the Bible. From an educational point of view, it's very well written - almost in poetic form, which adds to its interest for the children". The article appears in the ***Baptist Times*** for 12 June 2008, p. 16.

- Wendy Grisham, Publishing Director of *Hodder Faith*, talks about her ambitions for Christian publishing in Tom Tivnan's article *Gotta Have Faith* which appears in ***The Bookseller***, 18 July 2008, p. 21.

Wendy is the sister of the popular American novelist John Grisham but established herself in religious publishing here in Britain. She has set herself two targets – to get more Christian books into the high street, and to find the new C.S. Lewis for the twenty-first century. These are huge challenges, but Wendy has already achieved some crossover success as the UK publisher of William P. Young's ***The Shack***, a Christian novel that has sold 1.6 million copies worldwide after being rejected by several American publishers

PRESERVING THE PAST IN BERMONDSEY

GRAHAM HEDGES
reports on a recent visit
to the Church of England
Record Centre in
Bermondsey, South
London

On Tuesday 20 May 2008, thirteen members and friends of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship visited the *Church of England Record Centre* (CERC), in Bermondsey, South London. After the inevitable pizza lunch in a local restaurant, we walked the short distance to CERC's premises at 15 Galleywall Street, London, SE16 3PB.

Our hosts for the afternoon were **Declan Kelly**, Director of Libraries and Archives for the Church of England, and **Philip Gale**, Records Manager for CERC. Declan explained that, in addition to having overall responsibility for CERC, he is responsible for two other Anglican library collections. These are the *Lambeth Palace Library*, the historic library and archive of the Archbishops of Canterbury, which celebrates its four hundredth anniversary in 2010, and the library of the *Council for the*

Care of Churches. This last named collection is based at Church House, Westminster, and includes materials on ecclesiastical art and architecture.

The Records Centre exists to preserve the archives of the central institutions of the Church of England as they relate to the activities of the Anglican Church in England, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Some material relating to the Church in Wales is also available for the period leading up to 1920, but later Welsh material is generally kept by local authorities or stored in the *National Library of Wales*. CERC provides a historical enquiry service for researchers, and also a deeds enquiry service. The Centre often holds copies of deeds for local church properties that have not survived locally.

CERC has occupied its present premises since 1988 and the present Centre amalgamates earlier archives. It is based in a large warehouse, formerly owned by a brewery. Eight staff are employed there at present, a significant reduction from the twenty-five who were employed in earlier years. As a general rule, the Lambeth Palace Library serves as the reading room for the Centre. Researchers who wish to consult particular documents from the collection are required to give CERC five days notice and then visit Lambeth Palace where the required materials will be made available for their inspection.

The Anglican institutions whose records are stored at Galleywall Street include the

Queen's Anne's Bounty (1704-1948), the *Church Building Commissioners* (1818-1856), and the *Church Commissioners* (1948 to date).

Declan provided us with an introduction to some of the materials stored at CERC and showed us some sample documents from the collection. He explained, for example, that the Queen's Anne Bounty was a fund established during the reign of Queen Anne when the Crown handed over to the Church of England the assets that Henry VIII had seized from the Church at the time of the Reformation. The fund was then used to supplement the income of poorer parishes. The archive includes correspondence from churches who applied to receive financial assistance, not always successfully. The present *Church Commissioners* came into being in 1948 when Queen Anne's Bounty was merged with a body known as the *Ecclesiastical Commissioners*.

CERC holds the archives of the *General Synod* (1970 to date) and its predecessor, the *Church Assembly* (1919-70). These bodies are a comparatively new development in the life of the Church of England since, prior to 1919, all legislation affecting the Church had to be passed by Parliament. Since the Anglican church is the state church, Parliament still exercises ultimate control over church legislation, though this is generally a formality.

The Records Centre holds the archives of several external church organisations, including the *National*

Society for Promoting Religious Education (from 1811) and contains significant materials on church schools. Other church-related organisations – such as the *Church Mission Society* – also pay to have their records stored at CERC.

The Centre holds a great deal of material likely to be of interest to researchers. During the nineteenth century, the Anglican Church became a major landowner, and CERC's holdings throw light on the social implications arising from the Church's role as landlord. Holdings from the 1930s recall the controversies that arose from the requirement to pay tithes to the Church.

After Declan's introductory talk, Philip took us on a guided tour of the premises. He admitted that, although ventilation is provided, and temperatures are carefully monitored, there is no humidity control in the building. However, a large plastic tent has been erected in the warehouse area for the storage of particularly sensitive materials.

Our afternoon concluded with welcome refreshments and the taking of a group photograph for the LCF web site. Our thanks are due to Declan and Philip for a fascinating afternoon that was much appreciated by everyone present, whether or not they were members of the Church of England.

Graham Hedges, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, is Secretary of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship and works for the public library service in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

A LIBRARY IN STONE

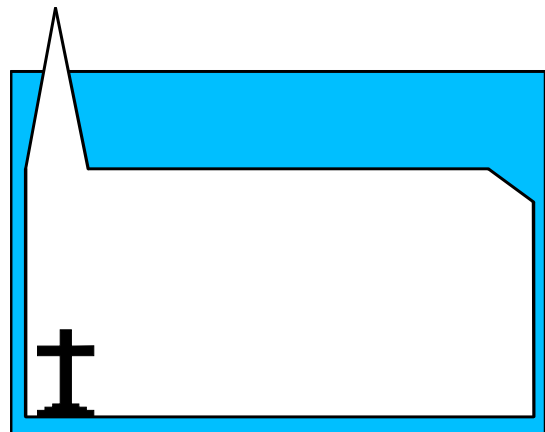
**ANNE MACRITCHIE reports
on a visit to Rosslyn
Chapel, arranged for LCF's
Scottish members on
Saturday afternoon 12 July
2008**

Five LCF members met for an enjoyable lunch in Henderson's in Edinburgh's New Town. We then took the bus to Rosslyn Chapel. There is a large canopy over the Chapel with a walkway underneath it which we climbed up to – this enabled us to see the wonderful carvings on the outside of the building and also have a wonderful view over the wooded Esk valley and Rosslyn Glen and the ruined castle.

We then joined a tour inside the Chapel which is where my title comes in – there are so many beautiful carvings it is quite breathtaking and there is a story associated with many of them. For example there are carvings of plants from the New World including maize which pre-date the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus as Rosslyn Chapel was built in 1446 by William St. Clair.

There is the famous Apprentice Pillar carved by an apprentice mason while his master was away and more beautiful than

the master's pillar next to it. The master mason was so angry on his return that he killed the apprentice! Many Biblical stories are portrayed and there is the largest number of "Green Men" (a sort of gargoyle) found in any Medieval building. There are also frequent references to the Knights Templar and Freemasonry which brings me to the Chapel's most recent claim to fame as it features at the end of Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code*. The Chapel is used for weekly services by the Scottish Episcopal Church. The reason for the canopy over the Chapel is that it was suffering from damp in some places but is now drying out without the need for any other treatment. Rosslyn Chapel is certainly a very beautiful building and well worth seeing.



Anne MacRitchie, BSc, works for NHS Grampian as an Information Assistant and serves the Librarians' Christian Fellowship as our Regional Representative for Scotland.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

***News from the Membership Secretary:
Janice Paine, MCLIP, 22 Queensgate Gardens,
396 Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London,
SW15 6JN. Tel. 020 8785 2174***

A warm welcome to one new member. Also listed below are those who have renewed their membership since early June. We would greatly appreciate it if payment could be sent before the end of April each year.

If you have changed address, job or e-mail, please let us know as soon as possible.

NEW MEMBER

BRETT, Mrs Valerie, 20 Station Road, Copmanthorpe, York, YO23 3SX -School Libn. Tel. 01904 701989, e-mail peterbrett@btinternet.com

REJOINED

JAMES, Mrs Denise, Librarian, Deane Memorial Library, Bible College of New Zealand, Private Bag 93104, Henderson, Auckland 0650, New Zealand, Tel. 64 9 8362541, e-mail denisej@bcnz.ac.nz

LATE RENEWALS

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MAIN ARTICLES

RICHARD RATCLIFFE outlines the history and record keeping of the main Non-Conformist churches. He tells us where to find their records today, and how these records can be used to see how ancestral families are involved in the life of our several churches

NON-CONFORMIST RECORDS

HOW TO TRACE YOUR CHRISTIAN ANCESTORS

An Address to the Librarians' Christian Fellowship Conference “*Looking Back and Reaching Out*”, held on Saturday 19 April 2008, in the Bell Room, Connaught Hall, Tavistock Square, London.

The Religious Census of 1851 was carried out on the same Sunday as the National Census, 30th March. It showed that out of a total population for England and Wales of 17,928,000, some 5,292,000 people professed to be Church of England, 383,000 professed to be Roman Catholic, 4,536,000 professed to be non-conformists (i.e. Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, English Presbyterian, Quaker or Unitarian). There were approximately 11,000 places of worship in England and Wales which were Church of England and approximately 15,000 non-conformist churches or chapels.

So there is a very good chance that some of your ancestors were non-conformists at some point in history. My father's family is a good example. My parents were married in Long Compton Parish Church in South Warwickshire. They had five children who survived infancy. My grandmother, Ada Ratcliffe, and two daughters, Winifred and Doris, went to the Parish Church. My grandfather, Thomas Henry Ratcliffe, and his elder son Nelson, went to the Wesleyan Chapel as did Ada's mother, Fanny; while my father and his elder sister, Lillian, went to the Ebenezer Congregational Chapel. So entries of the Ratcliffe family appear in the records of all three churches in the village. It's one reason why I have retired to Warwickshire, to try and check the records of Long Compton and the surrounding area, to find out where the Ratcliffe family came from before 1769. I've been stuck at that date for thirty-nine years!

So how can you find out what churches or chapels existed in the city, town or village where your ancestors came from. As I have just mentioned the 1851

Religious Census is a good place to start. There should be a copy for the county in the appropriate County Record Office or the local studies library. The complete Religious Census can be found in the National Archives and makes extremely interesting reading, as it shows the average attendances at morning, afternoon and evening services, and the number of Sunday School scholars who attended in the morning and the afternoon. For example, Gainsborough Wesley Chapel in Lincolnshire had an attendance of seven hundred and fifty in the morning and a thousand in the evening, while Sunday School attendances were two hundred and forty in the morning and three hundred and fifty in the afternoon. When I lived in Gainsborough, the Chapel had been pulled down and replaced by a modern box (which leaks like a sieve and may have to be rebuilt). There is currently an attendance of forty in the morning, there is no evening service and there is a Sunday School attendance of ten. How times have changed!

If you cannot easily find a copy of the 1851 Religious Census then a copy of **Kelly's** or **White's** Directories may be easier to check. There is a good collection of these county directories at the National Archives, and for the London area there is an excellent collection of the Kelly's Directories at the Bishopsgate Library, just a short walk from Liverpool Street Station. I have a copy at home of **White's Directory** for Lincolnshire (1856) which shows that in Grantham (the town Margaret Thatcher (nee Roberts) came from – her father was a prominent Methodist there) there was St. Wulfrum's Parish Church, which was founded in the 13th Century; St. John the Evangelist Parish Church, Spittlegate, built in 1841; a Catholic Church in North Parade, built in 1832, a Wesleyan Chapel seating 1300 in Finkin Street (where Mr and Mrs Roberts and their daughter Margaret worshipped), which replaced a smaller chapel erected in 1840; a Primitive Methodist Chapel dating from 1837; and then there were Independent, Calvinist, Wesleyan Reformers, and Baptist Chapels serving the town as well. At the time of the 1851 Census the population of Grantham was 8,500. Interestingly the Great Northern Railway didn't reach Grantham until 1852 so the great period of expansion hadn't occurred at that time.

The dates of building given in the directory are most useful because they tell us when church registers may have started, and probably other records that may have existed before those dates. For example, if you look in Quarter-Sessions records you may find that there are copies of records of dissenting meeting-house certificates that have been granted to religious groups who wished to hold house meetings, and which were later to develop into chapels. Recently at Methodist Central Hall Westminster, I received a package in the post of thirty dissenters' certificates from the

area around south Berkshire and north Hampshire. A man who had been a Methodist Circuit property steward in Newbury had these at home, and his son, who was clearing out the house had found them and didn't know what to do with them. He wondered if Methodist Central Hall would be interested in them. They have now been sent to Berkshire County Record Office, where they can be preserved with other Methodist and Non-conformist records for the county.

Methodist records

Of all the non-conformist churches, it is the Methodist denomination which has the greatest amount of records, going back to the journal of John Wesley which he started compiling in 1739, and the first Conference of Wesley and his Preachers in 1744. Their first London base was in Moorfields in a former foundry building, which had been derelict since 1716. This was before a chapel was built in City Road, which we now know as Wesley's Chapel. The Wesleyan movement began within the Church of England and eventually broke away in 1795 to become the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Dissent led to the creation of the Methodist New Connexion in 1797, the Primitive Methodist Church in 1807, the Bible Christians in 1815, the Protestant Methodist Connexion in 1827, the Wesleyan Methodist Association in 1834 and the Wesleyan Reform Movement in 1849. The last three groups came together in 1857 to form the United Methodist Free Church. In 1866, their president made the first overtures to the Wesleyans suggesting they unite to form the Methodist Church. It took until 1932 for this to happen! Meanwhile, in 1907, the United Methodist Free Church, the Methodist New Connexion and the Bible Christians amalgamated to become the United Methodist Church. Then in 1932 the United Methodist Church, the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyans combined together to form the Methodist Church. The Uniting Conference was held at the Royal Albert Hall as well as at Westminster Central Hall. Since 1932, there has been considerable consolidation and the Methodist Church of today has about a quarter of the number of churches and chapels which existed in 1932. That still means there are about four thousand Methodist places of worship in England, Scotland and Wales today.

Fortunately, all the Methodist groups which existed in the 19th century followed the lines of administration drawn up by John Wesley back in 1744. The basic church or chapel is part of a circuit; the circuit is part of a district; the district is part of the national or connexional Methodist Church. Having discovered the existence of a Methodist Church or Chapel in your ancestral town or village, the next step is to find out what records, if any, have been

deposited in the County Record Office. You may find that few records have been deposited and that a considerable amount of Methodist records are still kept in church safes or are in private hands.

Where a Methodist church existed before 1837 the registers should have been surrendered to the Registrar General. He called in all the non-conformist registers up to that time, and these registers can be found at the National Archives at class RG4. 856. Methodist registers – mostly baptismal – were surrendered but microfilms have now been made and can be consulted at County Record Offices for the particular county as well as via the Mormon LDS records. A complete list of all the Methodist records which were deposited in 1856, can be found in the booklet ***My Ancestors were Methodists*** by William Leary (Society of Genealogists). Some Methodist registers go back to 1770, but most date from 1795 - 1800, when the Wesleyan Church came into existence .

If you are looking for the records of a particular Methodist Church, a complete set of records should include baptismal registers from 1837 onwards or from the date of the opening of the church; marriage registers from 1898 or from the date when the church was licensed to hold marriages without the local registrar being present; and burial registers if there was an adjoining burial ground. The latter type is less common because the chapels were built on a 'printing house' model, which normally only allowed for a chapel and the Sunday school building next to it. Then there are the minute-books of meetings such as the church leaders' meetings, the Annual Church Meetings and the Trustees' meetings. All these contain the names of the attendees. It was normal for people to 'sign in' and the signatures can be quite interesting, if your ancestor attended one of these meetings. So are the pew-rent records from the time when people paid quarterly rents to reserve seats in church. It's incredible to think today that people had to do this, but paying for seats was a practice which went on from the early 19th century until the 1930s when it petered out. Then there are the registers of members with names, addresses, ages and occupations. They also show which classes they belonged to. In the Methodist Church they used to have class meetings during the week for Bible study and prayer. Many people who attended class meetings went on to become local preachers and, in some cases, ordained ministers. Registers of Sunday school scholars and church groups such as the Wesley Guild, the Band of Hope, the Temperance Movement, the Men's Group, the Ladies Group and of course, the choir may also survive. If you see any choir records you will read of some wonderful disputes between the choir and the organist (or musicians).

Remember, when you are searching at a county records office, that although these records can be found with the records for a particular town or village, they are more often found under Non-conformist records or simply under Methodism. Sometimes you will need to look under the name of the circuit to which the church belonged. For example, the Gainsborough Wesleyan Circuit in the Lincolnshire Archives Office includes registers of baptisms for the whole of the circuit as well as the registers for individual chapels, including Grimley-on-the-Hill and several other small villages in Nottinghamshire. In the early Nineteenth Century Methodist Sunday Schools were the only schools of any kind in the area, and children learned to read and write as part of their Sunday School lessons. In the Banbury Primitive Methodist Circuit Baptismal Register, now in the Oxfordshire County Record Office, you will find entries for chapels in South Warwickshire and West Northamptonshire, as well as North Oxfordshire. You need a little geographical knowledge when you are looking at Methodist records!

The most interesting circuit records for family historians would be the baptismal records for the whole of the circuit; the circuit quarterly meeting minutes, which will mention the opening, extension or closure of churches; and collections of circuit preaching plans and directories, which will show the names of circuit officers; lists of the chapels which were open, times of services and who was appointed to preach there. There may be a directory for each church, mentioning the church officers, stewards, organist etc. The local preachers' meeting records are also very interesting, because they have the names of preachers 'on note', those who were new preachers just starting out. You quite often find that they became fully accredited later on. It's worth noting that there were women and men local preachers in Methodism.

You may also find circuit membership registers, which are collations of the chapel registers, and they are usually a bit more detailed about people's attendance at church. In a circuit register you will find comments such as 'dead', 'left', 'fallen', 'approved', 'on trial', 'doubtful' or 'removed'. There may be other minute books and records of circuit meetings, very similar to those in the individual church organisations. Additionally you may find a circuit removals register, listing members who had moved away to another circuit, often young people moving to seek work elsewhere. I went to the East Yorkshire Record Office at Beverley, where I found a bundle of records called 'miscellaneous records'. I found a "Book of Removals" which listed a number of young people who went from Beverley to places in Yorkshire, particularly the woollen mill towns or even across the Pennines into Lancashire's cotton mill towns. It mentioned one young man who was going

to Ireland to be a missionary. A little later on it said he didn't make it to Ireland but stopped at West Hartlepool! Also in that miscellaneous bundle I found a will of John Arnott, dated 1838. This was quite a surprising item to find there, so I checked out why there should be a will in some Methodist records. The will mentioned about six houses in the village of Weel, all of which belonged to him. So I looked up the ***Victoria County History*** for the East Riding of Yorkshire, and I learned that a Methodist Chapel had been built in that village in 1866, '*under the terms of the will of John Arnott*'. So the will was the legal document which showed that he had owned the cottages and was therefore able to donate the proceeds to the Wesleyan Methodists there. At the Methodist Central Hall we have deeds in the Archives going back to the 1670s, referring to the houses and property which used to be on that site, because the Methodists have always been meticulous in trying to show that they own the freehold for their churches.

Many District or Connexional records of Methodism can be found at the Methodist Research Centre of the John Rylands University Library in Manchester. They are of limited interest to family historians but the library does have extensive collections of church histories, magazines, and newspapers for the pre-1932 Methodist denominations. Smaller collections of histories, magazines and newspapers may be seen at the Wesley and Methodist Study Centre at Oxford Brookes University. A wide range of Methodist papers can also be found in the British Library Newspaper Library at Colindale (you need to get there quickly because that is due to be re-located to Wetherby in 2010 or 2011).

Finally among the Methodist records, I must mention the Archives at Westminster Methodist Central Hall. It's a delight to work there, and one of the most important records deposited there is the Wesleyan Methodist Historic Roll. This runs to fifty volumes and contains 1,025,000 names of people who contributed a guinea, in the case of adults, or a shilling in the case of children, to the Wesleyan Methodist 20th Century or 'Million Guinea' Fund, between 1899 and 1904. Everybody who contributed was asked to sign on several sheets of paper. These records have been microfilmed, so it is possible to produce print-outs for researchers with Methodist ancestors. One page from Louth in Lincolnshire states that William Paddison gave a donation for himself and many of his relatives. He mentions: "*Frances Louisa Fletcher, an evangelist in Lincoln; Katherine Paddison, my dear mother who taught me to love God in my infancy; William Paddison, my dear father who died whilst speaking at a Love Feast at Salt Fleetby East New Chapel; Elizabeth Clapham, great-aunt, who once had the honour of holding a basin of water for John Wesley to wash his hands in.*" There are even

better ones from Otley in Yorkshire. This is where Charles Joshua Fernside Atkinson of Burley-in-Wharfedale, a local preacher, gave donations from himself and then also from his various ancestors including “1. *Atkinson (Christian name lost) in memoriam, killed in battle for his faith and liberty in 1644, an officer in Cromwell’s Wars.*” This is of course long before there were any Methodist churches but he had obviously traced his family history back and was very proud that he had an ancestor who probably fought in the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644. The Historic Roll identifies over 6,900 chapels which contributed to the Fund. They raised £1,087,000. Bear in mind the average wage in 1900 for agricultural labourers was fifteen shillings per week, which is what my grandfather earned, whilst living in tied cottages. But I have found two great-grandmothers in the Historic Roll: one was Fanny Warner, who I mentioned earlier, and the other was Mary Gascoigne “*in memoriam 1893*” and then just above it is the signature of one of her daughters, Clara. Mary had five illegitimate children over a twenty-seven year period, probably through five different men. But as she is in a Wesleyan Methodist document I’d like to think that, as she was baptised in the Church of England, she came over to the Methodists and they saved her from her earlier indiscretions!

Baptist records

After the Methodists, the Baptists are the next largest non-conformist church. The Baptist denomination is a very different kind of church to the Methodist Church. With the Baptists, each church is autonomous, and is governed by its church meeting, which decides whether the church should be independent or part of an area association, or belong to a national union of Baptist churches. The ***Baptist Union Directory***, which has only been published annually since 1973, gives a brief history of the Baptist Church in Great Britain. It states that the first Baptists were a group who came back from Amsterdam in 1611, hoping to gain full religious freedom and became known as the General Baptists. In 1633 another group, initially connected with a Calvinist Separatist church in London, formed themselves into an independent church called the Particular Baptists. In 1770, around the time of the Wesleyan Revival, an evangelical Baptist group, known as the New Connection, broke away from the General Baptists. Of these three groups the Particular Baptists were the most active, thanks to the leadership of Andrew Fuller of Kettering. He was behind the creation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, and the sending out of William Carey to India in 1793. I mention this particularly because when I was attending a small Methodist Chapel as a boy in South Warwickshire (part of the Banbury Circuit) we had a preacher who came from South India. He mentioned William Carey. I have done some research on William Carey, who came from Pottersbury in

Northamptonshire. He was taught by his father, the village weaver, to read and write, and then he went on to join the Baptists. In 1792 he proposed the setting up of the Baptist Missionary Society, and raised £600 himself to transport himself and his family out to India. He didn't have a single convert for the first thirteen years but he spent a lot of his time translating the New Testament into the different Indian languages he had picked up, which he did very quickly. Eventually he established a school and a training college in Serampore, and translated the New Testament into thirty-six different languages. It's a wonderful story of a young man coming from a small village, and the preacher I encountered all those years ago said how the Indian Christians remembered with gratitude the ministry of William Carey.

Supporting the Baptist Missionary Society led to a union of some Particular Baptist churches in 1812 and 1813. Eventually the Particular Baptists and the New Connection amalgamated in 1891 to form the Baptist Union. Today most Baptist churches are in the Baptist Union but some Strict Baptists remain completely autonomous, outside any association or group. The minister of a Baptist church is chosen by a meeting of the members, and the title 'minister' does not mean that the person has undergone theological training or has been ordained.

What of Baptist records? The births of children of Baptist parents are not usually found in Anglican parish church registers because the Anglican church favours infant baptism while Baptists favour believer's baptism, usually when a person attains adulthood. For legal purposes an Anglican certificate of baptism was accepted by the courts in the 18th century, but non-conformist records were not. Consequently you will find that some non-conformists, including Baptists and Roman Catholics, were prepared to use the services of the Anglican church to protect their property rights without worrying their consciences. Some legislation was passed in 1695 and 1700 to combat this injustice requiring dissenters' births to be reported to the parish priest and then recorded in the parish register. This was largely ineffective but may explain why some parish registers use the word 'born' rather than 'baptised'. It's always worth checking the Anglican parish registers for evidence of Baptist ancestors before 1837 since some people changed their religious allegiance several times during their lifetime. I found one reference in a Norfolk Anglican baptismal register in 1812, It recorded the name of a man, born in 1722 and stated that he "*has been a Baptist, a Congregationalist, a Methodist, a Unitarian, but now he has come to the Church of England to be saved.*" He was baptised on his ninetieth birthday!

It's worth noting that the indexes produced by the Church of the Latter Day Saints, available via the Family Search database, only records the

child/person being baptised and the parents' names. It does not display the age of the candidate, so these records can be misleading where the baptism was an adult baptism. Before 1837 Baptist churches kept records of births, marriages and deaths, although we must remember that between 1754 and 1837 all marriages should have taken place in an Anglican church as laid down by Lord Hardwicke's Act, except for Quakers and Jews who were exempt. Earlier, in the period 1688 to 1753, Baptist marriages were tolerated, but not legalised. All early Baptist registers should have been surrendered to the Registrar General, as the Methodist registers were, in 1837, and these can be found at the National Archives in class RG4. There is a list of all the surrendered registers in Geoffrey Breed's book ***My Ancestors were Baptists***. (Society of Genealogists). A considerable number of registers – far more than the Methodists – were not surrendered. They may be located either in county record offices or at the Baptist Records Centre in Regents Park College, Oxford. There are also some records kept by Baptist theological colleges, area associations of Baptist churches, or the Strict Baptist Historical Society. Full details about these depositories can be found in the book by Geoffrey Breed. It's also worth checking the General Register of Births of Children of Protestant Dissenters (Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians), which was set up by the Protestant Dissenting Deputies Body in 1742, for Baptist records. They are usually known as Dr. Williams Library Records. They cover the period from 1742 to 1837 although there are quite a few examples of retrospective baptisms before 1742 recorded, in some cases back to late Tudor times. They can be found at the National Archives under Dr. Williams Library under class RG4 (4666-4673). They include a considerable number of Baptist births from all parts of Great Britain. In most cases the mother's maiden name is given, which is extremely useful for trying to find a marriage. Baptist burials usually took place in Anglican churchyards unless the Baptist Church had its own burial ground. Some Anglican burial registers include the word 'Baptist' but most registers do not differentiate between Anglicans and dissenters. However, in London many Baptists were buried in Bunhill Fields, the burial ground just opposite Wesley's Chapel. Over 100,000 burials are recorded for the years 1713 to 1854 in thirty-three volumes, and they can be seen at the National Archives.

Congregational records

The origins of Congregationalism are unknown but the Congregational Church may be as old as the Church of England. On the accession to the throne of Queen Elizabeth I in 1558, the short period of Roman Catholicism under the reign of Mary came to an end. Elizabeth was made Supreme Governor of the Church in England, but it didn't mean there was an end to religious persecution. A considerable number of people refused to subscribe to the Church of England and met in secret. One group, who became known

as Separatists met in London under the leadership of Richard Fitz. He was elected their pastor and minister and was assisted by elected deacons and elders. Regular midweek meetings to deal with administration were held; membership of this group was determined by a declaration or solemn covenant. With little modification, the form of governance which Richard Fitz and his followers set up, remains the structure of the Congregationalism of today. About 1580, Robert Browne of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, founded a Separatist church in Norwich and this is regarded by some as the founding church of Congregationalism. Browne believed that Christians did not need the consent of a Church of England bishop to preach the gospel. The Church of England reacted strongly and forced Browne and his followers to flee to the Netherlands. Some time later Browne returned to England and submitted to the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, some of his followers refused to come back to England, including John Robinson, John Smyth and William Brewster who became part of the organising group who became the Pilgrim Fathers, going to America in 1620. I visited New Plymouth, Massachusetts, a few years ago where a replica of the Mayflower can be seen. It's incredible to think that on that small ship one hundred and ten people sailed across the Atlantic in 1670! It's even more incredible when you go to the Mormon Library at Salt Lake City to find that if every American who claimed to have traced back their ancestry to the Pilgrim Fathers was correct, the Mayflower would have to have carried 11,000 people! The Separatists who stayed in England, and didn't go off to New England, struggled to survive against the suppression of the bishops, especially Archbishop William Laud.

It was not until after 1640, after thousands had sought exile in Holland, that the Separatist movement began to grow during the Civil War period. This opened the floodgates for the 'Independents', as they became known, and for the next fifteen years they were able to worship openly without fear of reprisal. A large number of Anglican clergy were removed from their livings and were replaced by dissenting ministers during the Civil War and the Commonwealth period. That probably explains why a lot of parish registers at this time are very fragmentary. The latter years of the Commonwealth were a time of great confusion due to Cromwell attempting to create a Cromwellian dynasty, a move strongly opposed by the Independents. On the Restoration of the Monarchy under Charles II in 1660 over 2070 ministers were then ejected from their parish churches and replaced by Church of England clergy. One can imagine then why record keeping was so difficult to maintain. Independents had to resume meeting in secret in cottages and barns for years. Restrictions were eased a little in 1672 with the passing of the ***Declaration of Indulgence*** which permitted Independent, Presbyterian and Baptist ministers to be licensed. But it wasn't until 1688 when William III

- who had been aware of the problems of many of the Protestants (coming from Holland as Prince of Orange) - came to the throne and a **Toleration Act** was passed in 1689, giving official recognition to the meeting houses of all dissenters. This led to the establishment of over a thousand new fellowships between 1690 and 1710. A lot of those are recorded in Quarter Sessions since they met in houses before chapels were built. The main period of building Congregational Chapels didn't really start until 1750 and from then onwards a large number of purpose-built chapels came into being. The Congregationalists, like the other dissenters, still had to have their marriages solemnised in the Church of England. Towards the end of the 18th century the local Congregational churches began to form county unions. The first such union occurred in Bedfordshire in 1797. By 1832 the county unions had increased in numbers to form the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The 1851 Census shows that there were over two thousand Congregational chapels or meeting places, including five hundred in Wales, most of which were Welsh-speaking. In 1871 the Congregational churches in Wales formed their own Union of Independents, which survive to this day, with more than six hundred and eighty chapels belonging to that union. In 1972 the Congregational Church in England amalgamated with the Presbyterian Church of England to form the United Reformed Church. However, this amalgamation was far from total: over two hundred and fifty Congregational churches refused to join, and instead formed themselves into the Congregational Federation. A further thirty-four set up the Evangelical Federation of Congregational Churches and at least twenty-five others decided not to join any other association or belong to any grouping whatsoever. Strangely enough, I was baptised in a Congregational church – the Ebenezer Chapel in Long Compton, in Warwickshire, in 1941. I'm told on the day I was baptised the temperature outside was 92F! The chapel is still in existence and remains separate from the URC and is one of the two hundred and fifty churches in the Congregational Federation.

Congregational churches, like the Methodists and Baptists, had to surrender their baptismal, marriage and burial records to the Registrar General in 1837. A further appeal was made in 1857, which resulted in the surrender of more records, which can be inspected at the National Archives under class RG4. A full list of the Congregational records deposited there can be found in David Clifford's ***My Ancestors were Congregationalists*** (Society of Genealogists). I've already mentioned Dr Williams' Library. This contains a considerable amount of Congregational material. The Library contains histories of many non-conformist churches and their clergy. It includes a list of all known Congregational clergy from 1640 to 1716. Many thousands of Congregationalists who died in London were buried in Bunhill Fields. Minutes of each Congregational church's meetings of members and officials

may be found in the nearest County Record Office, or at the church if the church is still open. Sadly, like many records in Methodism and the Baptist Church, many minute books have been lost at the time of closure of a church or are gathering dust in the homes of former officers and ministers while many have simply been discarded.

Quaker Ancestry

The name 'Quaker' is the popular name for the members of the Society of Friends, a dissenting group founded by George Fox, the son of a Leicestershire weaver who started preaching in 1647. His followers, many of whom were radicals, were nicknamed 'quakers' from the trembling and shaking which occurred in their early meetings. Fox rejected the formal services of the Church of England, the sacraments of Holy Communion, baptism and marriage, paid clergy and the authority of the Scriptures. Fox emphasised the inner voice of God "speaking to the soul". The early Quakers often appeared before church courts for interrupting church services, insulting clergy and magistrates, for holding illegal gatherings and for the non-payment of tithes. The Quakers appear before the Quarter-Sessions frequently, for refusing to take oaths of allegiance and refusing to do military service. If you are looking at Quarter-Sessions records, first look at the minutes book for summaries of the business transacted. You may find a Quaker mentioned. Like the Congregationalists and the Baptists, they were given freedom of worship under the Toleration Act of 1689. Later, because of their excellent record keeping of births, marriages and burials, they were not required to conform to Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753. Their records are a joy to study. Many early Quakers were poor or working class, but after 1660 they recruited many adherents from the minor gentry, yeomen and craftsmen, urban shopkeepers and manufacturers. The early strongholds of Quakers were in Cumbria, Lancashire, Yorkshire and the North Lincolnshire Trent Valley. The movement spread to the larger settlements of London, Bristol and Norwich after the 1670s. By 1689, the Society of Friends were the largest dissenting religious group in England, despite the emigration of large numbers of their group to New England under William Penn, who founded the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania in 1681. By 1720 it is estimated there were 50,000 Quakers in England and Wales, but then the number steadily declined as many of the families of minor gentry returned to the Church of England. Why was this? The only explanation I have is that many of them were now beginning to be educated at the minor public schools being established and if they wanted to get into Oxford or Cambridge Universities, the only two in the country then, they had to have a Church of England qualification. Quakers, by and large, could not afford to go to Scotland where universities took in non-conformists, so they had to reject their Quaker religion.

Under the leadership of George Fox, a structure of monthly and quarterly meetings was set up in 1654 with annual meetings being added in 1668. Records of births, marriages and burials were normally kept by the monthly meeting. The minute books show that the members travelled considerable distances to attend the monthly meetings. The men's meeting dealt with membership, finance, property, discipline, and declarations of marriage, while the women's meeting dealt with poor relief and domestic problems of members. In 1694 approximately one hundred and fifty monthly meetings existed in England. The quarterly meetings were area meetings that dealt with membership and property matters, as well as queries passed down from the yearly meetings. The yearly meeting was a gathering of representatives from all over the country as well as representatives of Wales, Ireland, Europe and America. By 1670, most monthly meetings were keeping registers. However, some Quakers were prepared to use the Church of England for burials, again because they had no burial grounds of their own. Where they had burial grounds they were not allowed to erect gravestones until 1850. The design of the gravestone was more or less uniform across the whole of the country. Quaker registers of births, marriages and deaths were not kept in standardised form until 1776. At the same time, copies were to be sent to the quarterly meetings. The Friends' Library in Euston Road was set up in 1763 to preserve the early records, although copies may also be found in county records offices. In 1837, along with the Congregationalists, Methodists and Baptists, the Quakers were required to surrender their registers. 1445 such registers were surrendered, after two copies had been made by the local meeting. Someone would have had a heavy task there, as some registers might go back to the 1670s. One copy was kept by the Friends Library in London, the other kept by the quarterly meeting. The latter is the copy which may now be found in county record offices. A further one hundred and twenty one registers were surrendered in 1857, when the second call for registers was made. Once again the Quakers copied out their records before surrendering them. When looking at Quaker records, you should note that the Quakers rejected the names of the days of the week and months of the year, as they were derived from heathen gods. Sunday is therefore recorded as '*1st day*' and January as '*1st month*'. However, before 1752, when England changed from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar, the Church of England and the Quaker year started in March.

Finally, a word about sources of Quaker information. The minute book of monthly and quarterly meetings includes membership records, removals, and disownments. The latter happened where people were thrown out of the Society for being absent from meetings, for fathering or giving birth to an illegitimate child, drinking, serving in the army, or attending a meeting presided over by a clergyman. However, you also find records of re-

instatement, where people apologised for their misdemeanours and were accepted back. Some registers of births and burials include retrospective records back to the 1570s, and may well duplicate entries in the Anglican parish registers. Very important as well are the records of Quaker schools. Quakers set up some of the first minor public schools. One example is the Friends' School in Saffron Walden, which has kept very detailed records of past scholars. Look out for copies of Quaker journals. One example - the **Annual Monitor** – is a very small book but it does contain many obituaries. I've already mentioned Quarter-Sessions as being an important source for Quaker ancestry, because of their refusal to serve in the army, and for meeting illegally.

The Minutes of the Gainsborough (Lincolnshire) Quaker Meeting held on 11 of 2 month 1712 records that '*Joseph Robinson of Brant Broughton and Mary Fro, daughter of George and Mary Fro of Wintringham, appeared at the meeting to publish their intention of marriage with each other.*' At a Quaker marriage every member present witnessed the marriage, so instead of having two witnesses as in a Church of England marriage, you may find fifty witnesses signing the marriage certificate.

Finally!

I hope I have given you some idea of the wealth of records that may survive. Some are in county record offices, where they rightfully belong; some are still in church safes; but a lot are still in the houses of church officers and former officers. So when you meet people coming in to your libraries to research their non-conformist ancestors and not finding any records, do recommend that they ask questions of clergy and church officers. Many records are waiting to be discovered. If you can persuade people to deposit records no longer in use in County Record Offices you will be doing a valuable service for librarians, family historians and local historians, as well as for future generations.

Richard Ratcliffe is a retired Primary School Head Teacher and President of both the *Lincolnshire Family History Society* and the *Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry*. He is also a Fellow of the *Society of Genealogists* and is currently working as part-time Archivist at *Westminster Methodist Central Hall*. An experienced Family History lecturer and researcher, he has also written several booklets including ***Basic Facts About Methodist Records for Family Historians*** and ***Basic Facts About the Wesleyan Methodist Historic Roll***.

Why have pubs been inviting people to celebrate Jesus? What prompted thousands of cinema-goers to ask about God? How are virtual candles prompting people to pray? JEFF BONSER introduces three recent evangelistic initiatives

INNS OFFER ROOM TO JESUS



An Address to the Librarians' Christian Fellowship Conference "*Looking Back and Reaching Out*", held on Saturday 19 April 2008, in the Bell Room, Connaught Hall, Tavistock Square, London.

I received the invitation to speak at this meeting when travelling the country last year on a narrowboat. Having retired from the *Christian Enquiry Agency* last March, my wife and I promised ourselves a long cruise. So we set off after Easter last year and cruised the inland waterways for about four and a half months.

As we travelled the country we went to libraries to use the internet. We were able to download news and prayer requests from our church onto a memory stick to look at again on a laptop that we kept on the boat, and send news of our travels for the church magazine.

I had an existing link with the Librarians' Christian Fellowship dating from my days as Director of the *Christian Enquiry Agency*. Way back, CEA had produced bookmarks which went into libraries. Then, more recently, we shared a stand together at the *Library + information Show*, at a time when we were able to have a free stand.

Themes

The title of this talk is *Inns Offer Room to Jesus* about three evangelistic initiatives: *Pubs Celebrate Jesus*, *Cinema-goers Ask About God* and *Virtual Candles Prompt Prayer*. These are ways in which the Christian faith is being taken to people where they are. We are not saying through any of these, as we are in church in the main, “*come to us*”. We know that some people do, but most people don't - church is off their agenda. Patterns of work have changed, there is more to do on a Sunday, and for most people the thought of going to church – or even the thought of Jesus and the Christian faith – is just not there.

How can we connect with people? There are all sorts of ways, and I am sure that the churches that you are involved in are exploring some of them.

Broadcasting Background

First of all, perhaps I should say something about my own background. This year is the thirtieth year since I became a Christian. I don't know about you, but when I was a youngster in a village in Leicestershire, my Dad was a Sunday School teacher, and my sister and I were taken to church. In those days many people went to Sunday School. I did not appreciate it at the time, although some years later I thanked God for that beginning when I first heard the stories about Jesus and God. In my teenage years I had better things to do. I was involved in a pop band which introduced me to broadcasting and I applied for jobs with the BBC but got nowhere.

Around this time I got married and my wife and I wanted to go back to church, which happened to be a Baptist church in Chelmsford, Essex, and heard the gospel afresh including some amazing testimonies - “*I woke up in the middle of the night, and there was a flash of lightning, and God spoke to me*” - but this didn't happen to me. Later, after asking loads of questions about the Christian faith at an enquiry class I came face to face with God, made a Christian commitment, and prayed, “*Lord, I don't know it all, but you have revealed yourself to me. I am sorry for what I have done, let's have a new start and see where we go*”.

I am saying all this because things then changed dramatically for me. Obviously God changed my life, just as he has changed yours, and the Bible came alive for me, and so on. But at the same time someone said to me “*a commercial radio station is coming to Essex, and we have got this church group together, would you like to serve on it?*” Suddenly, the desire that I had as a youngster, which seemingly came to nothing, was back on the

agenda. Obviously God had been at work in my life, even though I had not realised. I joined the church group, worked as a volunteer on hospital radio and, along with others, applied for the local commercial radio licence and got it. *Essex Radio* – now *Essex FM* was established. After eight years at the station I went on to become the first director of what is now the *Churches' Media Council*, and was involved in establishing the Christian radio station *Premier Radio* in London.

Pubs Celebrate Jesus

That's enough about me – let's talk about pubs! Last Christmas, in December 2007, over fifty pubs and clubs in Leicestershire celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ. How can this be, you might well ask. While I was at the *Christian Enquiry Agency*, a national organisation, I got involved in many exciting evangelistic projects. In Manchester *Real Christmas* was launched to help the churches in the city to invite more people to church at Christmas. The organisers of *Real Christmas* asked the BBC in Manchester to broadcast a live carol service on a Sunday night, and they invited churches to receive the broadcast, play it out over their sound systems, and join in instead of their own evening carol services. Churchgoers found it easy to invite their family, friends and neighbours, not simply to come to church for a carol service but to take part in something much bigger, which involved the BBC and even had actors from ***Coronation Street*** doing the Bible readings.

As a result, more people came to church that Christmas, and churches were encouraged to be more welcoming, to have more confidence in praying for their neighbours, and so on.

That project doesn't happen anymore. A few of us involved in a Christian media trust in Leicestershire approached BBC Radio Leicester with a similar idea – a live broadcast carol service but from a pub. Other pubs, clubs, care homes, community centres, anywhere there are people not in church would be invited to receive the broadcast, and play it out in their venues. We would provide the carol service sheets, with the BBC's help, and people throughout the county could join in.

We devised a unique carol service for people who do not go to church with lots of familiar carols to sing along with, short readings from the Bible, prayers, activities including eating, pulling crackers and toasting Jesus - raising our glasses to the real meaning of Christmas. There was also a short reflection and a blessing for people wherever they might be listening (because, of course, this could be at home, as it was going out live over the BBC, and anyone could tune in).

We invited churches to go along to their local pubs, or other local venues outside of church buildings, and work with them and invite them to

join in and be part of SING CHRISTMAS.

In 2006, following a successful pilot broadcast the previous year, thirty venues joined in. Last year funding was obtained to employ a very part-time project manager – which happens to be me. 10,000 flyers were distributed through the denominations, Churches Together, libraries, tourist information centres, local authority mailings etc.

On the local BBC website there were posters and invitations, which could be personalised, plus song sheets – all for downloading and printing.

A major brewer in the region, Everards, became interested and invited all its pubs to join in. We contacted care homes, community centres, hospital and prison chaplains. Over a hundred venues joined in, and we were knocked out by this three-fold increase from the previous year. Half of the venues were pubs and clubs (thirty of them Everards pubs), there were around 30 care homes and, on top of that, we had community centres, schools, a civic centre, and an open air Christmas tree in a village. One branch of Sainsbury's, through the initiative of a local church, provided a sound system outside the entrance to the shop, played the BBC broadcast, and encouraged people to join in under the canopy.

Eighty churches or Churches Together groups worked with the venues, and we also used the project to raise money for the *Rainbows* children's hospice in Leicestershire.

We are already planning SING CHRISTMAS 2008, keeping it local again this year, but are talking to the BBC about the possibility of making the project wider in 2009. Could we involve other stations in the Midlands or even beyond? Could it even become national?

Cinema-goers Ask About God

The *Christian Enquiry Agency* is an organisation that enables thousands of people to encounter the gospel where they are and respond in ways they feel are appropriate and helpful. It provides opportunities for people to pick up a piece of literature or go to a website and decide whether or not to respond. If they do, the Christian Enquiry Agency is there to send information and provide help, including a local contact because we know that most people come to faith through personal contact. We are talking about people at a very early stage, just starting to explore the things of God. Many people, who do not go to church, are willing to check out issues of life and faith if they are given the right opportunity. The Christian Enquiry Agency is part of *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland* and works on behalf of all the denominations.

You will probably remember Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*, in 2004. This provided a great opportunity for Christians, and many people took advantage of it, around the country. I was staggered by the

amount of press coverage given to this film. Before it opened in cinemas, **The Sun** devoted its centre pages to the film and there was a countdown: '*five days to go before The Passion of the Christ*' – with coverage every day. If the churches had been required to pay for this space, it would have cost millions!

Most cinemas have a rack of free postcards for people to take away. Wouldn't it be great if there were Christian cards giving cinemagoers the chance to find out more? Christian Enquiry Agency developed this idea, raised the funding and created a '*Why*' response card. 180,000 cards were distributed to the main city centre cinemas via Boomerang Media. One half of the card was a response section, which could be sent freepost to Christian Enquiry Agency, offering a free booklet related to the film and the **So Who is this Jesus?** magazine. The other half simply said, "*Why did Jesus die? Son of God? Only way to God? Alive?*" We included the words of John 3:16 and the web address rejesus.co.uk/thepassion, where there was more material related to the film.

The response was staggering - within two weeks every single card went from the cinemas. But would any of the response cards come back? On average, the Christian Enquiry Agency receives 50 enquiries a week. Following the distribution of the **Passion** cards, 2500 people responded in two weeks. Can you imagine what our enquiry office was like? Normally, one person deals with the enquiries, and responds to people who come back a second time, but now everyone in the office had to drop their other work and help send out booklets. This was the largest response to anything we had ever done before. We were also encouraged by the percentage who came back a second time, asking for a gospel.

Response cards were then produced for the first **Chronicles of Narnia** and **The Da Vinci Code** films. A scratchcard with ten questions arising from Dan Brown's story invited people to answer "*true or false*". Again every card went from the cinemas, and some people took multiple copies and gave them out in their offices to see who could get the most right answers.

These were three of many projects that Christian Enquiry Agency has carried out, often in partnership with other organisations, and the Agency continues to provide response opportunities in a variety of ways and other resources which you might be able to use in your own local situation.

Virtual Candles Prompt Prayer.

There are millions of Christian web sites – many of them American, and few of them about Jesus for people who do not know him. This is a challenge for all of us who have church web sites. If someone who did not know Jesus came across your site, would there be anything there to help them?

Simon Jenkins and Bruce Stanley came up with the concept of rejesus.co.uk - a web site about Jesus which is not 'churchy' but inviting and relevant to people who do not know him?

Rejesus.co.uk came into being about five years ago and one of the main topics it creatively tackles is prayer. What if you are not a Christian, you do not know any Christians, but you want prayer for something? Who do you go to? Almost everyone has access to the internet and on the prayer section of the rejesus site you can click on a candle, write in your prayer request, and your candle lights up. It "burns down" over a day or two (your computer is perfectly safe!) and visitors to the site during this time can pray for you and your request. This is just one way in which rejesus helps people to receive and explore prayer.

There are many other features on the site including materials linked with the recent BBC series *The Passion*, with photographs from the programmes and opportunities to read more about Jesus. There are encounters with Jesus: how Jesus makes a difference in people's lives, spirituality, expressions of the Christian faith (such as the arts) and a community section where visitors can ask questions, debate issues and take steps of faith.

Conclusion

Three projects, which hopefully you will use in your local situation. Perhaps *Sing Christmas* could be relevant in your area, do get in touch. *Christian Enquiry Agency* provides outreach materials, especially for people in the wider community who are not yet ready to talk to us, or to come to church. And why not put a link on the home page of your own church web site to rejesus.co.uk so visitors can be referred to a site which will tell them more about Jesus.

Jeff Bonser has spent over twenty-five years in broadcasting and communications, including helping to establish two commercial radio stations – *Essex Radio* and *Premier Christian Radio*. He was the first Director of what is now *The Churches' Media Council* and went on to direct the work of the *Christian Enquiry Agency*. Now he is project manager of *Sing Christmas* - a unique evangelistic initiative using broadcasting.

LETTERS

FROM THE SECRETARY'S MAILBAG



GOD-GIVEN CREATIVE IMAGINATION

A Letter from Sue Rugg, Northolt, Middlesex

With regard to the two letters published in the summer 2008 issue of *Christian Librarian*, a few comments.

I agree with Jonathan Morgan that works by the authors he lists are fantasy and that in the case of those by J.K. Rowling and Philip Pullman they do not contain specific Christian doctrine, as these authors make no claim to be Christian. However, I do not agree that this negates their value, as all fiction is to an extent fantasy and I see that as an enjoyable product of a God-given creative imagination. Admittedly this can be misused and we need to be discerning, but there is a wealth of good literature by non-Christian writers, just as there is very good music written by non-Christian composers, which can be life-enriching.

In fact I think attempts to make the Harry Potter books a '*salvation narrative*' are misguided. They do indeed contain some Christian values as all goodness and positive morality emanate from God originally and have not been totally effaced from our secular society. Even Philip Pullman, an avowed atheist, portrays love and self-sacrifice and positives. But to force them into a Christian mould to justify reading them is unnecessary and

unhelpful. Let us just enjoy them for what they are - or not, depending on taste.

Whilst recognising the danger of the occult and not wishing anyone, least of all children, to be led into it, personally I find the magic in Harry Potter largely to be of the 'abracadabra' variety and not of a Satanic bent. Christian parents would need to discuss this with their children and point out Biblical teaching on the subject, but it would probably be counter-productive to try to prevent them reading the books. By the time children are old enough to read the Philip Pullman trilogy and the later, darker Harry Potter books they are being exposed to a lot more insidious un-Christian influences in the media and even at school and need to be trained in discernment rather than being told not to read such literature.

We do have to live and work in an increasingly secular and even anti-Christian world, which is not easy, and whilst maintaining Christian distinctiveness need to do that in a positive way, promoting Christ's character in the messy business of life, rather than condemning anything not specifically Christian in origin.

THOUGHT-PROVOKING AND SPIRITUALLY CHALLENGING

A Letter from Barbara Gilman, Beverley, East Yorkshire

I note from the Yellow Page section that Jonathan Morgan (*Christian Librarian*, Summer 2008, pp. 34-35) is, like myself, a subscriber to the magazine and not an LCF member. From his writing I would deduce that this is probably for theological reasons, as is the case with me. *Unlike* Mr Morgan however, I find every issue of the magazine packed with articles and features that are usually thought-provoking and often spiritually challenging. Its news coverage of the Christian scene is second to none. I therefore resent the somewhat patronising suggestion in his concluding sentence that I am at risk of being misled! I am also unclear as to exactly what *he* means when he speaks of "*Christian distinctiveness from the world*". If the magazine really encapsulates

"a shallow belief, with no feeling of God's wonder and grace", and represents a Christianity that is "of the world" - whatever that means - then surely Mr Morgan, who clearly aspires to *not* be "of the world", is duty bound to cancel his subscription?

IN DEFENCE OF LCF

A Letter from Janet Danels, Sale, Cheshire.

As a long-term member of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship, I would like to respond to the letter to the Editor from Jonathan Morgan in the Summer edition of ***Christian Librarian***.

I do have a certain sympathy for some of Mr. Morgan's views, in that sometimes I do not see the need to give space to particular comments (from outside the Fellowship) which appear non-Christian or even sometimes anti-Christian in their perspective. However, I feel that overall he is being unjustly critical.

I do believe strongly in Christian distinctiveness from the world. I currently attend Sharon Gospel Church in Old Trafford, part of the Assemblies of God. (My views, however, are my own and should not be taken as belonging to a particular church).

When one sets out to comment on an organisation, or on a periodical, one needs to look first at what it is trying to do. LCF is not there to provide uplifting spiritual teaching (which one hopes members can receive at church), but to provide a forum where professional issues can be looked at in the context of our Christian faith, and where sometimes problems arising in the workplace in connection with our faith can be discussed. In order to do this without confining itself to a very small number of members, the organisation needs to take into account a broad spectrum of Christian belief. For these reasons, the general perspective tends to be intellectual rather than spiritual, although there is certainly spiritual input. For myself, I appreciate the intellectual stimulation within a Christian context, as my life generally contains very little of this whereas it does contain a lot of spiritual input.

Furthermore, one needs to take account of the activities of

LCF as a whole. While speakers and topics vary a good deal, relatively recently we have had two inspiring talks on evangelism, by Jeff Bonser at this year's Annual Conference and prior to that by a speaker from the *Christian Medical Fellowship*. Neither of these talks would have been out of place at church. Earlier we had an excellent lecture on Tyndale which was both intellectually stimulating and spiritually inspiring.

Through attending events over the years, I have become aware of certain people who have been and are involved in founding and in running LCF, past and present, who are without question dedicated Christians who really live out their faith in their lives. These people have given a great deal of commitment in time and hard work, in some cases over many years, because they believe the purposes and function of the Fellowship to be important and worthwhile. It must be upsetting for them to have their faith effectively stigmatised as 'shallow' and worldly, and I would like to assure Mr. Morgan that, in their case at least, this is not true. (I don't offer names for fear of missing someone who should be included.)

Mr. Morgan criticises what he sees as an emphasis, in the Spring 2008 issue, on children's authors. In fairness to the Editor, one should recognise that he does not have unlimited resources of material: in quite a small organisation he is restricted by whoever is willing and has the time to contribute to a particular issue, and the subjects on which they are prepared to write! G.P. Taylor was in the issue because he gave the previous Annual Lecture, which is normally reproduced in a later issue of *Christian Librarian*. In fact, all of these authors, although they have written books aimed at children, are known for being widely read and enjoyed by both children and adults. C.S. Lewis produced a much larger output for adults than he did for children: many Christians are interested in his work in general and in his life, as probably the foremost defender of Christianity to the secular world in the last century. I have reservations personally about some elements of his work, but I still acknowledge his greatness: he had a remarkable ability to present doctrine with clarity and simplicity. The popularity of the visit, some years ago, to his former home indicated the high level of interest in him among members of LCF. Anyway, many librarians

are involved professionally in work with children. Even if one is not working in this area, I would suggest that any Christian ought to take some interest in what children are currently reading, given the power of the written word to influence the mind. Pressure to recommend, purchase, and even read aloud or study in a group, questionable writing for children is surely a major workplace issue for Christians. While I would vehemently disagree with some of the views on these authors expressed in the Spring 2008 issue, I would not question the suitability of their work for discussion by Christian librarians.

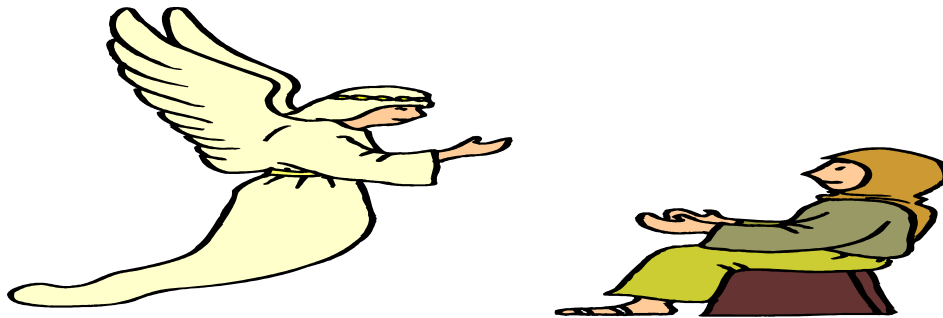
While I am aware that one sometimes meets Christians who condemn fantasy in general, I do not subscribe to this view although I would probably not wish to read the majority of current works in the fantasy genre. I am not aware of anything in Scripture which would condemn imaginative works in general. In fact, the Scriptures themselves make use of pictorial imagery of various kinds, including metaphor, allegory, and parable. Fiction cannot be equated with lies, as it is not purporting to be true. God has given us imaginations, and when we use them appropriately they can be of great help in getting through life, as well as providing considerable personal enrichment. Mr. Morgan says that he sees “*no specific Christian doctrine*” in any of these authors. Philip Pullman is avowedly hostile towards Christianity, and I fully agree with Glynis Sullivan regarding J.K. Rowling, but as regards C.S. Lewis and G.P. Taylor, the underlying Christian concepts are sufficiently obvious to have sparked considerable hostility from those opposed to Christianity, and I can only marvel at how Mr. Morgan can possibly manage to remain unaware of them! (I do feel unsure myself about G.P. Taylor's work, but I respect what he is attempting to do. In any case, the Christian concepts leap out at me!)

While it is a good thing to have members who are prepared to contribute thoughts and ideas, let us be fair to the purposes of the Fellowship, and let us not criticise one another in a personal way, but rather encourage one another in the face of the growing hostility which we face as Christians from the non-Christian world.

THE LAST WORD

Sacred Diarist **ADRIAN PLASS** recalls some personal experiences that underline the importance of honesty and obedience in the Christian life

IT'S A SIGN!



An Address given at the Literary Luncheon held at the UK Christian Book Awards organised on Wednesday 15 May 2008 as part of the national Christian Resources Exhibition at the Sandown Park Exhibition Centre. The Awards were sponsored by the Christian Book Promotion Trust and its Speaking Volumes project.

I would like to tell you two or three stories that really mean something to me. I will begin with one of the first stories that I ever told, and it dates from a time before my wife Bridget learned to drive (I don't drive now). We caught a bus from Norwich to London, and as usual we tried to get the front seat because my legs are so long. We queued for hours, and we were just about to get on the bus when it arrived, and sit on my front seat, when we were gazumped by a lady further back in the queue who nipped round and sat on my seat! You know how unpleasant nice people can be sometimes. Bridget was really cross, and she said, *"Excuse me, we've queued for two hours for this seat. My husband needs it because of his legs"*.

What she didn't add was that it was only because my legs are long. People in the queue were saying, *"Ah, he's got bad legs ... and he's so young"* (which I was, in those days). We got on the bus, and we sat in the front seat, and all these eyes were staring at my legs, obviously picturing the jelly-like putrefaction underneath the cloth. They were talking about bad legs in general, and my bad legs in particular.

Half way down to London, we stopped at a cafe for tea, and everybody got off except Bridget and me. Bridget and I finally got off, and we could see our little support group hanging around by the door of the cafe obviously wondering how the badness of my legs would affect the way I walked. You would have been strong, wouldn't you? I was appallingly weak. I limped heavily from the bus to the cafe, with Bridget beside me laughing hysterically. Of course, I felt obliged to repeat this ludicrous "Hunchback of Notre Dame" impression all the way back, with Bridget nearly wetting herself by this time. My support group were really enthralled. Not only had I got bad legs, but I had a loony wife as well, who just laughed every time we walked anywhere together. The conversations went on and on, deep into obstetrics, and all sorts of other things.

This was one of the first stories which made me ask questions that seemed important. My question on that occasion, if I can remember it, was "*how many other little unreal worlds are created by misunderstanding, and maintained by cowardice?*"

Because we travel in the Church so much, we meet many, many, many people who have never experienced what we mean when we talk about "*a relationship with Christ*". They may have been in the Church for a long time, they may be ministers, they may lead groups, they may speak in tongues, or prophesy, but in their hearts they know that it has never happened. Not for them. It is very difficult to summon up the courage to tell people that, especially when they are pillars of the Church – or pillocks of the Church.

That was the very first thing that suggested to us that it would be good to get into the whole area of honesty. It has also become very important to realise just how useless we are. I will tell you another story about something that happened to me. At the time it was excruciating.

I was asked to speak at a pilgrimage. It was a two mile pilgrimage, and I was at the front with the church leaders. There was a cross being carried in front, and we were walking out towards the sea. We had completed about half the distance, and I was talking to the man next to me, when I suddenly realised that everybody was listening to me. All the voices had dropped, and they were listening to me. I thought "*my goodness, I'm brilliant, I didn't realise that I was such a good speaker*". I noticed that the man next to me had an odd mixture of annoyance and frustration on his face, but I thought that he was probably just a little bit jealous. I actually raised my voice so that more people in this line could hear me. As I raised my voice, I remembered that on the little leaflet we had been given it stated "*for the second half of the pilgrimage we*

will be maintaining silence for prayer and meditation”.

I asked God to open up the ground and swallow me – but he didn't because he was enjoying himself too much. These incidents have been so useful in grounding us. We are such weak vessels. I remember my definition of “Pillar of the Church” in my last book: *“a big thick thing that holds everything up and obscures vision”.*

My third story is about obedience. I reckon that there are two tasks for the Christian. One is to be loved, and many people haven't reached that point yet, just the realisation that God loves them. You will know, from your own work and the people that you work with, how hard it is for people to absorb the fact that God's love is unconditional. The second task is to be obedient. Once you know that you are loved, it is less difficult. We worked for years with kids in care and we discovered that, once they know that you care for them, you can do all sorts of things that wouldn't be possible otherwise.

I want to tell you about one experience of obedience that I had at Spring Harvest. In the old days, non-Christians used to say to me, *“what is this Spring Harvest?”* and I would say, *“it's five thousand Christians together at Butlin's – with the bar shut”.* They would say, with a certain lack of conviction, *“it sounds great”.* Nowadays, they do have a bar open. On this occasion I was there, and I was in a chalet. Three speakers were staying in this chalet, and I was one of them. I arrived first, which was wonderful because it meant I could choose my room. There was a communal kitchen, a communal bathroom and a communal sitting room. I arrived at the chalet, unpacked my case, and took out my stash of food. I always have a little stash of food when I travel, and on this occasion I had a packet of those french fancies, with the coloured icing on top, a large crusty loaf, a large piece of mature cheddar cheese, some real butter (not that *“oh, my goodness, how can you possibly describe this as margarine?”* stuff), some tea and coffee. I put all my food, all my stash, on the shelf in the bedroom, not in the kitchen, because if I did that, the others would eat it. I stood in front of my food, and I looked at it like Gollum, and I said, *“that's mine, that's my food, and I am not going to move it into the kitchen because it's mine and I don't want them to have it”.*

Even as I said those words, I thought, *“what are you talking about? You've come to Spring Harvest to tell people about God and you can't even share your cheese and pickle!”* It was awful, and I had to take all my food and put it in the communal kitchen. I didn't want to do this, but the Holy Spirit doesn't give out “wanting to kits”: he simply calls for obedience.

We met a man after a meeting recently, and he said, "*I've been waiting for twenty years for God to make me obedient*". I spluttered, "*I don't think you've quite grasped the concept of obedience. It's a matter of will*". The problem is that for most of us, every day, the choice is between what we don't want, and what we *really* don't want. On this occasion, I didn't want to share my cheese and pickle, but I *really* didn't want to be a follower of Jesus who wouldn't share his cheese and pickle.

And that, realistically, day by day, is what being a follower of Jesus means, that you take those choices and you make the right choice. But beware: if you are not loved, if you do not have in your heart the feeling that you are loved, you will find this very difficult. You will find yourself asking "*Why? Why should I do that?*"

Before I finish, I will tell you one more little story, which happened the other day. I was in Redhill last week. My brother was in hospital, and I was walking along the road, and I felt that I needed a sign. You know that feeling: you want some tangible sign from God, like something out of chapter twenty-five of a Kingsway paperback. I said to God, "*I need a sign, a sign that things are OK, something that will mean something*".

As I walked along the road, a lady came towards me and I said to God, "*see that woman, she'll do fine. Let her stop me, and give me a sign.*" I walked on, and she came towards me, and she stopped, quite suddenly. She said, "*You're Adrian Plass, aren't you? I've read your books, and I really like them*". I said, "*yes, yes*", (still waiting for a sign). She said, "*that's all really*", and she walked on.

I was very disappointed, and I said to God, "*that's not a sign*". But then I thought, it *is* a sign. The sign is: how lucky we are. How lucky I am to do what I do, to go where I go, and to be involved with the things that I am involved in. And how lucky all of you are, that God has given you something really valuable. It's a sign - so get on with it. God bless you!

Adrian Plass is a popular author and speaker, whose published output has included novels, short stories, poems, sketches, and reflections on the Christian life. His many books include such titles as ***The Sacred Diary of Adrian Plass, Aged 37 ¾***; ***Bacon Sandwiches and Salvation: An A-Z of the Christian Life***; ***Jesus: Safe, Tender, Extreme***; and ***Clearing Away the Rubbish***.