

Autumn 2014



# ***CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN***

## **CONTENTS INCLUDE**

- ***SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2014:  
“CHRISTIAN FICTION” LECTURE IN BEDFORD***
- ***THE VIEW FROM ATLANTA***
- ***LETTING GO***
- ***ESCAPING FROM THE BUSTLE OF LONDON***
- ***LOSING THE PLOT BUT TRUSTING THE AUTHOR***

## EVENTS AT A GLANCE

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*William Booth College, London,  
SE5 8BQ. Details: pp. 11-12.*

### ●SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2014: VISIT TO BUNYAN MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

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8-10.*

### ●SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2014: ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

*Bedford Central Library, Harpur  
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Collins**, Publishing Director, *Lion  
Fiction* and *Monarch* on "A New  
Strategy for Christian Fiction".  
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*YMCA, 7 East Street, Leicester,  
LE1 6EY. Speakers: **Diana  
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Oladipo**. Details: p. 12.*

## PRAYER NOTES FOR AUTUMN 2014

### PLEASE PRAY FOR

●An increase in the membership  
of *Christians in Library and  
Information Services*.

●Our forthcoming activities  
including our October 2014 Public  
Lecture.

●The work of *Transform Work UK*  
and its activities on behalf of  
Christian workplace and  
professional groups.

● The work of Dr. **Neil Hudson**  
and his colleagues at the *London  
Institute for Contemporary  
Christianity*.

● The work of the *Association of  
Christian Librarians* in the United  
States and especially its new  
Editor-in-Chief and editorial team.

●The work of our main  
professional association, the  
*Chartered Institute of Library and  
Information Professionals* and its  
branches and groups.

●The wider library profession in  
an era of closures, reduced  
budgets, and other difficulties.



## **FOUNDED IN 1976 AS THE LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

*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.christianlis.org.uk](http://www.christianlis.org.uk)*

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## THE FIRST WORD

**EDDIE OLLIFFE returns to a major Christian trade event in the United States and finds it much changed since his previous visit**

### ***THE VIEW FROM ATLANTA***

**A view from CBA's International Christian Retail Show 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia ... Evangelical Christian publishing in the USA is clearly not in great shape ...**

After a gap of well over ten years, I returned to what I knew as *Christian Booksellers' Association*, now called *International Christian Retail Show*, and was shocked by what I found. This was the sixty-fifth anniversary of the show but it's a shadow of its former self. The rump of an industry that once covered several exhibition halls rivalling the Frankfurt and London book fairs is now reduced to a few aisles in a single hall easily covered in one day.

To me, the booths were smaller, the visitor numbers lower, the aisles seemed quiet and the delegate 'buzz' felt decidedly restrained. However, products did appear a little less 'trashy'; perhaps suppliers are more focused as a result of the downturn.

**Such major industry shrinkage is salutary. *Publishers' Weekly* reported this year's attendance was 'flat' with 3,722 delegates (against 3,739 in 2013), 1,520 of whom are classed as 'Buyers'. To put this year into context, at CBA's fiftieth anniversary only fifteen years ago, there were over 15,000 attendees!**

## What has happened since the heyday of CBA in the late '90s, when the turnover of American Christian publishers hit \$3 billion?

Well, for one thing, the States are now a vastly different place to that of even five years ago. Evangelical churches are haemorrhaging numbers especially from its younger demographic. Churches are extremely exercised by how many young people are leaving. *Barna Research* suggests that 61% of 'once church-ed-youth' are now 'spiritually disengaged'. Politically, evangelicalism is not the force it once was (for good or ill, depending on your point of view), and as Philip Yancey observes in his forthcoming book, ***Vanishing Grace*** (Hodder Faith), American evangelical Christianity finds itself on the back foot culturally.

## The largest Christian product market in the world is clearly struggling to make the numbers work.

This year IRCS was held in Atlanta, and next year in Orlando, Florida (28 June – 1 July 2015). But where then? Those close to the decision-makers predict a much reduced fair with a smaller and possibly more relational format. A re-invention along the lines of the UK's *Christian Resources Together* event would seem sensible.

The plus point is that IRCS presents a really good networking opportunity and continues to work for the international community. I counted well over twenty Brits present in Atlanta and there were a good number of other nations represented. The weather's better as well!

Several US houses were celebrating their own special anniversaries this year. Baker Publishing Group, seventy-five years; *Send the Light Distribution*, forty years; *Harvest House*, forty years, and *Gospel Light*, eighty years.

**Eddie Olliffe** is President of *Christians in Library and Information Services* and Consulting Editor for ***Together*** magazine. He blogs at <http://eddieolliffe.wordpress.com> and is on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/rddieolliffe>

## THE SECOND WORD

**LOUISE MANNERS** finds inspiration in a recent book that combines wry humour with faith and trust in God and gives a moving account of the loss of a husband through cancer

# ***LETTING GO***



In ***Letting Go of Ian*** Jo Cundy describes her public and private journey with Ian Cundy as solicitor and wife of the Bishop of Peterborough, through Ian Cundy's death and funeral then alone to New Zealand where she almost died in *Christchurch Cathedral* during the earthquake there. This memoir is a chronicle of cancer diagnosis and bereavement but it is fused through with faith and trust in God, love of *Peterborough Cathedral* and of the wider *Church of England*.

To balance the pain there is a wry humour in constant mentions of Ian Cundy's enthusiasm for DIY and of his and others' delight in hill-walking. An example is when a family discussion of the diagnosis of pleural mesothelioma is postponed because son Robert and his partner Susan are

climbing Machu Picchu in Peru. Jo Cundy approaches the most painful events with humour, for example not knowing Ian Cundy's password on his House of Lords laptop at the time of his death.

The description of the visit to New Zealand is unusual in that there is little talk of the animals and plants and Christchurch is treated as just another cathedral city. This may be explained by Jo Cundy's parents both being New Zealanders so New Zealand was a place with a lot of family ties. Jo Cundy was staying with Bishop Victoria Matthews and spending time catching up with Jo Cundy's cousin who had been her bridesmaid. Jo Cundy bought a book in the cathedral bookshop at 12.46. The cousin felt ill at ease and at the cousin's suggestion they walked to the north aisle. At 12.51 part of the collapsing tower came through the cathedral roof where they would have been sitting if they had not walked to the north aisle.

Does the memoir convey the personality of Ian Cundy? I knew him some years ago when he was Rector of *St. Mary's* Mortlake. His preaching was excellent. He was extremely modest but persuasive with it so he achieved change without upsetting congregations. Regarding his time at Peterborough I was interested in Jo Cundy including the decision to send out about eight hundred letters about the cancer diagnosis. The post bill must have been quite large that week!

Jo Cundy, ***Letting go of Ian : a faith journey through grief***, Monarch Books, 2014, £7.99, ISBN 978-0857215383.

**Louise Manners**, *DipLib, MA, MCLIP*, serves as Chair of the Executive Committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

NEWS

***SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER 2014***

**Visit to John Bunyan Museum and Library,  
Mill Street, Bedford, MK40 3EU, from  
11.00.a.m.**

**Lunch, from 12.15.p.m.,**

**- plus –**

***ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE:***  
**Meeting Room, Central Library, Harpur  
Street, Bedford, MK40 1PG, from 2.30.p.m.**

***TONY COLLINS***

**Lion Fiction and Monarch Books  
speaking on**

***“A NEW STRATEGY FOR  
CHRISTIAN FICTION”***

**Details Next Page**



## **FICTION STRATEGY**

**A New Strategy for Christian Fiction** is the title of the annual public lecture of **Christians in Library and Information Services** (formerly the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship*) to be held on **Saturday 18 October 2014** in the **Meeting Room, Central Library, Harpur Street, Bedford, MK40 1PG, from 2.30.p.m..**

Sales of Christian fiction in the UK have been poor over many years. The new *Lion Fiction* imprint is setting out to develop a new approach to faith and fiction. Guest speaker **Tony Collins**, publisher of *Monarch* and *Lion Fiction* at *Lion Hudson PLC*, will be exploring the options and considering the response to date, both in the UK and overseas.

**Tony Collins** has spent his life working in Christian publishing, first at *Hodder and Stoughton*, then *MARC Europe*, then *Kingsway*, where he started the *Monarch* imprint. In 1992 he purchased *Monarch* from *Kingsway* and ran it as his own company for eight years before selling it on to *Angus Hudson Ltd*. When *Angus Hudson* merged with *Lion* in 2004 *Monarch* became one of the new company's publishing imprints and in 2013 Tony started a further imprint, *Lion Fiction*.

Tony is a Reader in the

*Church of England* and lives in Hastings, East Sussex. In the autumn of 2013 he undertook a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella. In June 2014, at the *Christian Resources Together* conference for booksellers and suppliers, he won an award for his Outstanding Contribution to Christian Publishing, sponsored by the *Association of Christian Writers*.

Graham Hedges, Secretary of *Christians in Library and Information Services*, says "*Fiction is a major part of many libraries and bookshops and we are keen to see a positive Christian voice in this area of publishing. We are pleased to be highlighting Christian fiction writers in our forthcoming lecture*".

## **BUNYAN'S PROGRESS**

For those who can get to Bedford in time there will be another opportunity to follow in the footsteps of one of the early pioneers of Christian fiction: John Bunyan, author of the ***Pilgrim's Progress***.

From 11.00.am. we are arranging a visit to the **Bunyan Museum and Library** which forms part of the *Bunyan Meeting Free Church* in Mill Street, Bedford. This is built on the site of the barn that Bunyan and his

congregation purchased in 1672 for use as a place of worship.

The Museum re-opened in its present form in 1998 and visitors can now walk through the life and times of the famous seventeenth century preacher, pastor and author. Artefacts associated with Bunyan's life are on show and there is also a modern display illustrating scenes from Bunyan's best known work.

There may also be time to look at the main church building and look at the bronze doors depicting scenes from ***Pilgrim's Progress*** and the famous stained glass windows that inspired Terry Waite during his time as a hostage.

After the visit we hope to arrange **lunch** for members and friends in a local restaurant, from 12.15.p.m.

There is **no need** to book for the afternoon lecture but if you would like to join us for the Bunyan visit or lunch **please let me know**.

## ***JOIN US IN BEDFORD***

The afternoon lecture should be of interest not only to librarians but to others interested in literature and Christian publishing. Attendance is *not* restricted to librarians and the organisers are looking forward to welcoming a wider audience. Last year's annual lecture on C.S.

Lewis was our best attended event ever. Can we repeat this in 2014? Possibly not, but please plan to attend and encourage friends and colleagues to join us.

Bedford is likely to be an accessible venue for many of our members and friends, especially those from London, the South, the Midlands and the North of England.

For Inter-City travellers Bedford Midland station is on the London St. Pancras – Sheffield line which also passes through Luton, Wellingborough, Kettering, Leicester and Nottingham. It is also on the Thameslink service which covers the route from Brighton – Bedford and stops at East Croydon, Sutton, Wimbledon, several central London stations, St. Albans, Harpenden, Luton and Flitwick.

Those coming from Birmingham should change at Bletchley and catch a train to Bedford St. John's. For motorists Bedford is not far from the M1 motorway.

Further details of the lecture, and the morning visit to the *Bunyan Museum*, or the wider work of *Christians in Library and Information Services* can be obtained from The Secretary, Graham Hedges, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Telephone 020 8599 1310, E mail [secretary@christianlis.org.uk](mailto:secretary@christianlis.org.uk) Web site [www.christianlis.org.uk](http://www.christianlis.org.uk)

# CLIS

Christians in  
Library and  
Information  
Services



## **NEWSLETTER**

**From The Secretary:**

**Graham Hedges, Hon.**

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### **SALVATION ARMY HERITAGE**

This issue may arrive in time to remind readers that on **Wednesday 17 September 2014** we will be organising a visit to the **Salvation Army International Heritage Centre** at the **William Booth College, Champion Park, London, SE5 8BQ**. This will begin at 2.00. p.m. but we hope to arrange lunch in a local restaurant, from about 12.00. noon, for those who can arrive in time.

The *Salvation Army International Heritage Centre* tells the story of *The Salvation Army* from its origins in the 1860s to the present, both in the UK and overseas. The Centre collects, preserves, catalogues, researches and makes available

materials that tell the story of the life and work of the movement. The collections form a library, archive and museum.

The Heritage Centre reference library collects books and pamphlets published by, or written about, *The Salvation Army*.

The archive collection includes paper records, photographs and films while the museum highlights such themes as the musical heritage of *The Salvation Army*, opposition to its work from the earliest days until the present, the Army's commitment to social justice and working with disadvantaged people, and the story of how the mission spread throughout the world and is still growing today.

*William Booth College* is close to Denmark Hill Station which is served by trains from Victoria, London Bridge, Blackfriars, and Elephant and Castle. The nearest tube stations are Oval (Northern Line) and Elephant and Castle (Northern and Bakerloo lines), from where the journey can be completed by bus.

If you would like to join us for this visit, and/or lunch beforehand, please let me know as soon as possible.

## **JOIN US IN LEICESTER**

Next year's Annual Conference is to be held on **Saturday 18 April 2015** in the **Theatre, YMCA, 7 East Street, Leicester, LE1 6EY.**

CLIS member **Diana Edmonds**, Head of Libraries at GLL, who currently run the public library services in *Greenwich* and *Wandsworth*, will be speaking on the hot topic of library privatisation and outsourcing.

**Emmanuel Oladipo**, who has been involved in *Scripture Union*, Nigeria, and with the Rev. John Stott's *Langham Partnership*, will be our second speaker. We have suggested that he might like to speak on his own work as a Christian writer, the importance of encouraging Christians to read, the state of Christian publishing in developing countries, or a combination of these topics.

Please book the date now and plan to join us in Leicester.

## **BREAKING THE MEMBERSHIP BARRIER**

We have been pleased to welcome several newcomers into membership recently – but we need to recruit more! Existing

members can help to make this happen by introducing CLIS to friends and colleagues who are not currently members.

Please don't assume that your colleagues already know about CLIS or that, if they were interested in joining, they would already have done so. They may just be waiting for a personal invitation from you!

If you would like to order copies of our publicity materials for contacts, or would like us to send information on your behalf, please contact our Membership Secretary, Janice Paine, 22 Queensgate Gardens, 396 Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London, SW15 6JN. Tel. 020 8785 2174.

Alternatively, our brand new all-colour A4 leaflet/poster is now available for downloading from [www.christianlis.org.uk/resources/publicity-materials](http://www.christianlis.org.uk/resources/publicity-materials). Please print this out and display it on your library or church notice board, or anywhere it may be seen by interested people..

We also need to recruit the services of a Recruitment Officer. If you are interested, please let me know.

## **TRANSFORM WORK UK**

On Monday 7 July 2014 I attended an informal meeting of

representatives of Christian professional groups, including the *Association of Christian Teachers*, the *Social Work Christian Fellowship* and *Christians in Communications*. This was arranged by our past speaker Ros Turner on behalf of *Transform Work UK* and held at the London offices shared by the *Christian Medical Fellowship* and the *Lawyers' Christian Fellowship*.

This meeting provided a useful opportunity to put faces to names and to exchange ideas and experiences. It was noticeable that almost all of the representatives expressed the same problem: that it is increasingly difficult to recruit younger professionals into professional groups. Joining organisations seems to be going out of fashion in contemporary youth culture!

At the time of writing *Transform Work UK* is planning to exhibit at *Momentum*, an event for students and people in their twenties and thirties arranged by *Soul Survivor*. It is intended that publicity materials for a number of professional groups, including CLIS, will be available at this event which takes place between **22 – 26 August 2014** at the *Bath and West Showground* in Somerset.

This issue will probably not arrive until after these dates have passed, but please pray that

similar initiatives will prove successful in making the work of Christian professional groups more widely known to recent entrants to our own and other professions.

You can obtain more information about *Transform Work UK* from 1 Christie Drive, Huntingdon, Cambs., PE22 8JD, or from the web site [www.transformworkuk.org](http://www.transformworkuk.org)

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS**

- Dr. **Jill Barber** has been elected as Vice-President of the *Methodist Conference* for 2015-2016.

Dr. Barber is currently Director of the *Heritage for Mission Project* at *Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism*. She is a trained teacher and librarian, with a PhD in archives, and has worked in Cambridge, Aberystwyth and London. Before taking up her present role in 2011, she was Head of Heritage Services for *Hertfordshire County Council*.

- Past LCF speaker Canon **Richard Burridge** has recently re-opened discussion about the *Monty Python* biblical spoof ***The***

**Life of Brian**, suggesting that the Church missed a chance for a public debate about Jesus and how different he is from the fictional character of Brian depicted in the controversial 1979 film.

Richard Burridge, Dean and Professor of Biblical Interpretation at *King's College*, London, gave our annual lecture in 2005.

*Is He More than a 'Naughty Boy'?* appears in the **Church Times** for 13 June 2014, p. 15.

- Our member **Michael Gale**, who works as Librarian of *The Queen's Foundation*, in Birmingham, has recently written about his experiences in setting up a *Facebook* page for his library.

Michael says that he has been “*underwhelmed*” by the response but believes that it is too early to conclude whether the venture has been successful. He notes that *Facebook* is not really designed for libraries. “*It is a social media tool, and the clue is in the word – social. It is designed to facilitate our social lives, not our working lives*”.

*Slow Burner: Harnessing Facebook in a Theological Library* appears in **Bulletin of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical**

**Libraries**, Volume 21, No. 2, June 2014.

- The present writer, **Graham Hedges**, has recently reviewed books for **Idea**, the magazine of the *Evangelical Alliance*.

Books featured in recent issues are Peter S. Williams' **C.S. Lewis vs. the New Atheists** (Paternoster, £18.99, ISBN 978-1842277706), Steve Turner's **Popcultured** (IVP, £10.99, ISBN 978-1844749058) and Irving Finkel's **The Ark Before Noah** (Hodder, £25, ISBN 978-1444757057).

- Our past speaker **Tony Jasper** is administering a second bi-annual competition for playwrights on behalf of the *Arts Centre Group*.

The winners will each receive a cash prize and the winning plays will be performed by professional actors. The winners will be announced at the *Society of Authors* in London on Thursday 23 October 2014.

Tony is sponsoring a prize for writers under the age of thirty and there will also be a prize for writers of all ages.

Further details are available from the *Arts Centre Group*, c/o *Paintings in Hospitals*, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor,



51 Southwark Street, London,  
SE1 1RN. Web site:  
[www.artscentregroup.org.uk](http://www.artscentregroup.org.uk)

- Our past speaker Professor **Roy Peacock** is the author of the autobiography ***Paradigm Shift: a scientist's journey through experiment to faith*** (Authentic, £8.99, ISBN 978-1780780986).

This tells the story of Roy's conversion from religious sceptic to Christian believer, his work as an engineer and scientist, and his parallel career as evangelist, preacher and healer.

Roy Peacock gave our annual public lecture on Religion and Science in October 1995.

## ***TILLING THE SOIL AND PLANTING THE SEED***

It must be every conference organiser's worst nightmare to have a speaker drop out at the last minute. This happened, not once but twice, at this year's *Christian Resources Together* conference when Adrian Plass and Jennifer Rees-Larcombe both had to cancel their participation due to health problems.

Despite these setbacks the

Conference proved to be a memorable occasion and was appreciated by the several hundred booksellers and suppliers (and one solitary librarian) who assembled at the *Hayes Conference Centre*, Swanwick, between 2 – 3 June 2014.

Starting the proceedings **Conrad Gempf**, Lecturer in New Testament at the *London School of Theology*, spoke on the theme "*Committed to Strive*" and countered the popular assumption that it must be 'heaven' to be involved in full time Christian work. Christian service is not a picnic and the Christian life is often one of striving and struggling. A key verse in Conrad's talk was "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Philippians 2:12).

A seminar on the future of Christian publishing was sponsored by the *Association of Christian Writers* and included contributions from several well known book trade figures including freelance editor and writer **Amy Boucher-Pye** and our forthcoming CLIS annual lecturer, **Tony Collins**, of *Lion Hudson*.

Despite the problems that have afflicted the Christian book trade in recent years, Tony's view of the future was relatively bright "*because God is always doing something new*".

Discussion inevitably turned to the current status of electronic books. There is some evidence that sales of e-books have reached a plateau, at ten to twenty per cent of total book sales. It was noted that some members of the **Woman Alive** book club have gone back to printed books and that *Hodder and Stoughton* are publishing more first editions in hardback. There is no single approach that can be applied to the publishing and marketing of all books, and titles need to be treated on a book-by-book basis.

The problem of getting Christians to read was raised and it was lamented that few church leaders give book recommendations to their congregations. The decline of the old book agency scheme was highlighted as a matter for regret.

The current status of Christian fiction was raised and Amy Boucher-Pye suggested that the genre has “grown up” in recent years. Tony Collins explained that the new *Lion Fiction* series offers books that provide “more than a humanist perspective on life”. The novels are not always explicitly ‘religious’ and the aim is “tilling the soil, not planting the seed”.

The Conference dinner was followed by the presentation of awards to writers, publishers and booksellers. Alister McGrath won the Book of the Year award for his

**C.S. Lewis: a life** (Hodder and Stoughton, £9.99, ISBN 978-1444745549) while **Adrian Plass and the Church Weekend**, by Adrian Plass (Hodder and Stoughton, £8.99, ISBN 978-1444745467), was recognised as the fiction book of the year.

Professor Tom Wright’s monumental **Paul and the Faithfulness of God** (SPCK, £65.00, ISBN 978-0281055548) won the award for Reference Book of the Year.

*Church House Bookshop*, in Westminster, won the accolade of Independent Large Retail Store of the Year, while *Lion Hudson* was recognised as the Publisher of the Year.

A Community Impact Award, sponsored by the Christian Book Promotion Trust’s *Speaking Volumes* library scheme, went to the *Bridge Bookshop* of Stockton.

Tony Collins, of *Lion Hudson*, won an award for Outstanding Contribution to Christian Publishing, sponsored by the *Association of Christian Writers*.

Master story-teller **Bob Hartman** spoke on the theme “Committed to Serve” and kept his audience entertained with his re-telling of the story of Zaccheus and a reading from his book **The Tapestry** (Authentic Media, £6.99, ISBN 978-1904637585), which he described as “Tom



*Wright's Surprised by Hope for six year olds".*

**Paula Renouf** led a seminar *"How to Give Books Away and Still Make a Profit"*. This introduced the *Speaking Volumes* scheme in which individual churches, Churches Together groups, and chaplaincies are encouraged to buy collections of Christian books for donating to public, school and other libraries. Christian bookshops are encouraged to take the lead in promoting the scheme to their customers and *Speaking Volumes* will pay fifty per cent of the cost of the books purchased.

**Sheridan Voysey**, author of *Resurrection Year* (Thomas Nelson, £9.99, ISBN 978-0849964800), brought the conference to a close with a talk entitled *"Committed to Succeed through the wilderness"*. Sheridan described his own personal experiences of disappointment and broken dreams and drew a parallel with the Christian book trade which has recently experienced the demise of *STL*, *Wesley Owen*, and *Kingsway Distribution*. Yet, the wilderness can be a place of God's revelation and provision. Sheridan asked the question: *"Who are you when all the dreams are gone?"* His answer was *"a Child of God"* and he encouraged his audience to re-cycle suffering into service to

others.

Next year's *Christian Resources Together* conference is to be held at *The Hayes* between **Tuesday 15 – Wednesday 16 September 2015** and you can get more information from CRT, 4 Ditchingham Close, Aylesbury, Bucks., HP19 7SA, or from the web site [www.christianresourcestogether.co.uk](http://www.christianresourcestogether.co.uk)

You can get more information about *Speaking Volumes* from P.O. Box 1070, Whittlesford, Cambs., CB22 4WX, or from the web site [www.speakingvolumes.org.uk](http://www.speakingvolumes.org.uk)

## **FROM THE SECRETARY'S MAILBAG**

**Eddie Olliffe's** suggestion in our previous issue that suppliers and customers should boycott *Amazon.co.uk* attracted the following response from our Gloucester member **Richard Johnson**. What do others think?

*"After I was made redundant five years ago I set up as a second hand theological bookseller on Amazon Marketplace. Having, in the past, worked for several years for Wesley Owen (in the days when it was Scripture Union bookshops!) I obviously do not*

want to compete with struggling Christian bookshops, and I only sell second hand books that they are unlikely to stock. I get no stock directly from publishers. My concern is to make useful older books (that are often out of print) available to Christians around the world; and frequently I have received grateful comments from such customers.

I can still remember a 'phone call from a man who had bought an old booklet giving the testimony of someone who had survived a concentration camp, telling me, 'I knew that man sixty years ago. I knew he had written a booklet about his experiences, but I have never been able to find a copy. Thank you so much.'

Of course, it is extremely difficult to make a living out of this; after five years, for the first time I'm almost earning the minimum wage! However, I get very frustrated when well-meaning Christians call for a blanket boycott of 'Amazon', as it is not Amazon themselves who will suffer much by this, but hundreds of small self-employed booksellers such as myself, who are struggling to make a living while (at least in my case) doing what they feel called by God to do.

I certainly do not support the tax policy or some of the other practices of Amazon UK, and as a market-place seller I have made protests to them about various

unjust practices over the years. I can understand people calling for a selective boycott of Amazon's own holdings (indeed, I would be very glad if more people chose to buy from small Amazon market-place sellers instead!); but what frustrates me is the naive call for a total boycott 'on Amazon' which will simply cripple little sellers such as me".

## **NO FAULT OF THE LIBRARY**

The adequacy (or otherwise) of the religious books sections in public libraries is a topic that has often been debated in these pages. Our President, **Eddie Olliffe**, has recently drawn my attention to an interesting discussion on this subject that appeared in a Canadian blog entitled **Christian Book Shop Talk**.

The author introduces an imaginary young man, Sam, who is toying with the idea that maybe there is a God after all. He has always been an intellectual and so he does what he always has done when he wants to find the answer to something: he goes to his local library.

After collecting an armful of books by the "new atheists" – Harris, Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens, etc. – he goes to the

somewhat scant section in the library on Christianity, which is less familiar territory. Here he finds a number of rather lightweight books, by people that he vaguely recognises from television, such as Bishop T.D. Jakes, a book written by one of the popes, and a book about the history of Christianity.

*“Christlanity doesn’t stand a chance! This is not the fault of the librarian. She picks books based upon bestseller lists, professional reviews, and requests from patrons.*

*The books that are most popular in Christianity are usually not intellectual or scholarly treatments. Truthfully they are more akin to self-help books than anything to do with the gospel. But most librarians don’t know this. They often have meagre budgets and so if they are going to stock something in the non-fiction section then they need to be sure that it is something that will be checked out.*

*But none of this bodes well for people like Sam trying to learn the truth about Christianity. We need to help our librarians and young learners like Sam to at least be able to give the gospel a fair shake”.*

To what extent would these comments be applicable to public libraries here in the United Kingdom? Is the writer being unfair in dismissing books from

the more popular end of the Christian spectrum (or books written by popes)? Let me have your views, please, and we will include them in a later issue.

## **TOLKIEN’S REVOLVER**

An army revolver carried by **J.R.R. Tolkien** is one of the items currently on display at the *Imperial War Museum North*.

Tolkien, who later became a member of the famous *Inklings* group of Christian writers with C.S. Lewis and others, was a Second Lieutenant when he went to the front line in 1916.

He served as a battalion signals officer for the *First Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers* from June to October that year. While there, he fought in the Battle of the Somme and his wartime experiences are widely believed to be reflected in his later fantasy novels including ***The Lord of the Rings***.

When Tolkien contracted trench fever he was sent to a hospital in Birmingham and it was there that he began work on drafts of what became ***The Silmarillion***.

The Webley Mark VI revolver which is now on show at the *Imperial War Museum North* was the standard side-arm issued to officers during that period of the First World War.

Tolkien's gun was first put on display at the Museum in December 2013 in advance of a major exhibition, *From Street to Trench: a World War that Shaped a Region*, planned to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. This exhibition opened in April 2014 and will remain open until May 2015. Admission is free.

*Imperial War Museum North* is located at The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester, M17 1TZ, and you can obtain more information from [www.iwm.org.uk/visits/wm-north](http://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/wm-north)

## **CURRENT AWARENESS**

- The third *Bloxham Festival of Faith and Literature*, held at the *Bloxham School*, in North Oxfordshire between 30 May – 1 June 2014, marked the centenary of the First World War by exploring the legacy of war, the desire for peace and the relationship between the two.

The programme began with a gala dinner at which the Poet

Laureate, **Carol Ann Duffy**, presented a collection of her poetry.

(Past LCF speaker) **Lord Harries** interviewed the former Foreign Secretary, **Lord Hurd**, who, although no pacifist, urged caution when it came to “*putting people in a position to kill or be killed*”. A defence of war by theologian **Nigel Biggar** and Major General **Tim Cross** was followed by probing questions from Canon **Angela Tilby**.

In his second appearance Lord Harries discussed the work of two war artists: Stanley Spencer and the painter-poet David Jones.

The Rev. **Andrew Studdert-Kennedy** took part in a panel discussion on his grandfather, **G.A. Studdert-Kennedy**, World War I chaplain and poet. He suggested that his grandfather was not as well known as other war poets, because he wrote for the men in the trenches, many of whom were not highly educated.

**Rhidian Brook** spoke about his novel ***Aftermath*** (Penguin, £7.99, ISBN 978-0241957479) which opens in September 1946, as the Allies began the process of rebuilding Europe after the Second World War. The book is about the reconstruction of a country, and the reconstruction of a marriage, but also engages with larger

themes of justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, and rehabilitation.

**James Cary**, co-writer of the BBC3 comedy series **Bluestone 42**, discussed the programme which follows the lives of a bomb-disposal squad in Afghanistan. He talked of the minefield of ethics and sensitivity that had to be crossed in bringing the series to the screen but said that the writers “*were trying to tell the truth of what it’s like to be a soldier*”.

Two very different poets, **Malcolm Guite** and **Padraig O Tuama**, joined forces to read work that explored conflict, suffering, and resolution.

**Jenn Ashworth** always wanted to be a writer but was born into a Mormon family where missionary zeal took priority over fiction. She discovered the joys of literature in the public library and later learned valuable lessons about humanity while working as a prison librarian. Her recent novel **The Friday Gospels** (Sceptre, £8.99, ISBN 978-1444707748) explores life in the *Church of the Latter Day Saints*, a religious group that the author abandoned in her teens.

Michael Arditti read from his novel **The Breath of Night** (Arcadia, £11.99, ISBN 978-0957330450) which is about sanctity and holiness set against the background of liberation in the Philippines.

*War Stories and Peace Talks*, by Malcolm Doney, Meryl Doney, and Paul Handley, appears in the **Church Times** for 6 June 2014, pp. 22-24, 43.

- **Steve Goddard**, author and PR consultant, is interviewed in a recent issue of the **Church Times**.

Steve’s novel **Rattles and Rosettes** (Ship of Fools Ltd., Print £7.99, Kindle £3.56, [www.rattlesandrosettes.com](http://www.rattlesandrosettes.com)) tells the story of two fictitious football fans a century apart, in 1914 and 2010. The real life figure of Rev. G.A. Studdert-Kennedy, World War I army chaplain, better known as “Woodbine Willie”, also appears in the story. The book is not intended solely for football enthusiasts but touches on such themes as obsession, religious observance, and the social situation in 1914.

Steve started out as a musician but, having become disenchanted with the music scene, switched to journalism and spent several years as editor of the Christian magazine **Buzz**. As a freelance PR consultant he now works for a range of clients.

In his spare time he is co-editor of **Ship of Fools**, a deliberately iconoclastic web site that is also committed to the ultimate value of faith.

Steve’s *Back Page Interview*, conducted by Terence

Handley MacMath, appears in the **Church Times** for 25 July 2014, p. 40.

- Are e-readers turning physical books into relics? Will bookshops continue closing down or become places where customers browse the “*real thing*” before downloading a digital copy? Will authors by-pass traditional publishing in favour of self-publishing?

These are some of the issues considered by Amy Boucher Pye in *The Future of Books*, included in **Woman Alive** for August 2014, pp. 32-33.

The challenge presented by electronic forms of publishing is real. However, many industry professionals believe that the switch to e-books has been much slower than predicted. In the Christian sector current trends indicate that the preference is still to read or use printed resources, though there are exceptions.

E-books can relieve pressure on overloaded bookshelves, but some early adopters of e-books are returning to physical books as they seek the experience of a ‘*real*’ book.

E-books can make up forty per cent of fiction sales but Christian publishers are not yet seeing this volume of sales for their non-fiction titles. For *Hodder Faith* electronic books currently account for ten to fifteen

per cent of their sales.

The Bible sells well as an e-book but many of these sales are for additional rather than replacement copies.

It is difficult to browse books on on-line services like *Amazon* and e-books have not overcome the hurdle of use for academic study: the referencing is just too difficult!

- Cole Moreton’s *A Poet Who Sets Puzzles* looks at the poetry of Dr. **Rowan Williams**, Master of *Magdalene College*, Cambridge, and former Archbishop of Canterbury. A collected edition ***The Poems of Rowan Williams*** (Carcaret Press, £9.95, ISBN 978-1847774521) has recently been published.

Dr. Williams first began to write poems as a schoolboy in Swansea and, for some time, wrote bad imitations of Dylan Thomas. More recent influences have included W.H. Auden, Geoffrey Hill, now Professor of Poetry at *Oxford University*, and the Welsh priest-poet R.S. Thomas.

He does not want to be thought of as a “*religious poet*” but as a poet who happens to be a religious person. He writes a mixture of poems about faith and other subjects.

His poetry is not meant to

be easy reading but sets puzzles and requires work on the part of the reader.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 18 July 2014, p. 31.

- **The Christian Librarian**, journal of the Association of Christian Librarians in the United States has a new Editor-in-Chief **Garrett Trott**, who in everyday life is Reference and Instruction Librarian at *Corban University*.

Articles in Volume 57 (1), 2014 of the journal include *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Librarianship* by Garrett Trott, *Christian Librarians and the Library Bill of Rights* by Scott Kaihoi, and *Library as Place: Being Human in a Digital World* by Amanda C.R. Clark.

- *Teaching in the USA* by Sheila Ray recalls how the writer taught a summer course on *Materials for Children* at the University of Texas at Austin during June and July 1984 at the invitation of LCF/CLIS Life Vice President Professor **Donald G. Davis, Jr.**

This followed on from the year that Donald had spent teaching at the *Birmingham Library School* as part of an exchange arrangement.

The article includes accounts of visits to the home of

Donald and his late wife Avis, "a very old house, dating from 1884, in the 'Hyde Park' area of Austin". On one occasion the house was open to the public as part of a tour of historic homes and Avis and her daughters dressed in nineteenth century costumes.

The article appears in **Post-Lib**, No. 72, June 2014, pp. 9-10, the magazine of the *Retired Members' Guild of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals*.

## **EBSCO PUBLISHING**

*Christians in Library and Information Services* (formerly LCF) has an electronic licensing relationship with **EBSCO Publishing**, "the world's most prolific aggregator of full text journals, magazines and other sources". The full texts of our two main publications - the **E-Newsletter** and **Christian Librarian** - are available on *EBSCO Publishing's* databases. Subscribers are able to retrieve articles from our publications and CLIS will receive a small commission for each article.



# CLIS

Christians in  
Library and  
Information  
Services



## ***ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

**Minutes of the Meeting held  
on Saturday 5 April 2014 in  
the Chancellor's Room,  
Hughes Parry Hall, 19-26  
Cartwright Gardens,  
London, WC1 9EF.**

**Apologies for absence** were received from: Peter Ainscough, John and Penelope Andrews, Lois Cooper, Barbara Gilman, Karen Hans, Philip Hayworth, Heather Lewis, Elizabeth Pool and Jean Woods.

**Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Annual General Meeting (Saturday 19 April 2013)**

This was proposed by Richard Waller and seconded by Janice Paine. There were no matters arising.

**Annual Report (written by the Chair and Secretary)**

This report, circulated in advance of the AGM, was accepted.

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Graham Hedges, the Secretary, led the Meeting in a prayer of thanksgiving for two people who had died recently: Elizabeth Watthews (LCF member) and Dr. Donald Drew (an Annual Lecture speaker).

### **Treasurer's Report (Nick Horley)**

CLIS' financial situation is reasonably healthy, with a small profit made on the last Annual Conference and generous donations from members. Production of the ***Christian Librarian*** continues to be the main expenditure, and CLIS will need to attract new members to maintain increasing expenditure.

Approval of the report was proposed by Robert Foster and seconded by Kirsty Robinson.

### **Election of Officers**

**President:** Eddie Olliffe

Proposed by the Executive Committee

### **Life Vice Presidents:**

Margaret Keeling and Richard



Waller

Proposed by the Executive Committee

**Secretary:** Graham Hedges

Proposed by Kim Walker and Janet Danel

**Membership Secretary:** Janice Paine

Proposed by Margaret Stone and Robert Foster

**Scottish Secretary:** Anne MacRitchie

Proposed by Myrtle Anderson-Smith and Moira Mitchell

**Prayer Secretary:** Karen Hans

Proposed by Janice Paine and Diana Guthrie

All present voted in favour of these candidates.

**Motion proposed by the Treasurer on behalf of the Executive Committee**

*‘That the annual subscription of Christians in Library and Information Services should be £27.00 from 1 January 2015 and that the reduced rate for two members living at the same address, and for retired, unemployed and student*

*members, should be £17.00 each’.*

This motion was seconded by Christine Gagan, and approved by the Meeting.

## **Any Other Business**

In reply to a query about the duties of the new Prayer Secretary post, Graham Hedges mentioned compiling the annual prayer diary and possibly forming prayer partnerships within the membership, but as this was a new post, much would be left to the initiative of the holder.

Mary Wood encouraged the membership to think creatively about making CLIS more effective; we need more members who are prepared to get involved with workplace issues and in the organisation of CLIS. A Recruitment Secretary, with the specific remit of encouraging new membership amongst younger professionals, is still being sought.

The meeting closed with a PowerPoint presentation, compiled by Richard Waller, of the history of the *Librarians’ Christian Fellowship*.

## ***ESCAPING FROM THE BUSTLE OF LONDON***



**DEREK JOWETT enjoys a warm summer's day in a place that very few people may think to visit**

On a beautiful day, Tuesday 10 June 2014, nine members of CLIS met in Fulham to enjoy a guided visit to *All Saints' Church* and *Fulham Palace*. Fulham is probably one of those places in London, that, not being in the city or west end, very few people visit - unless of course they're football or boat race fans! Rather a pity as, down by the church on the

river, we could have been in a pleasant country village.

We were met by our guide Vernon Burgess, one of the voluntary guides attached to *Fulham Palace*, a member of *All Saints' Church*, and an extremely knowledgeable local historian, all of which meant that we were in for a very interesting and informative day.

Fulham is an ancient borough whose name could mean '*place of fowls*', '*place of mud*' (referring to the constant flooding in past ages) or '*place in bend of the river belonging to Fulla*'. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it became known for gambling, and a '*fulham*' was a name given to loaded dice!

In more recent times Fulham became the home of Frederick Simms, an early motor enthusiast who brought the Daimler concession to Britain, was instrumental in the abolition of the four mile an hour speed limit and a founder of the RAC, and notably pioneered the first armoured car before the First World War. A survivor of the Second World War is a pillbox, now a listed

monument, on Putney Bridge tube station!

Fulham's most notable residents however were the Bishops of London, whose home was *Fulham Palace* from about 700 to 1973 A.D. and who were closely associated with the parish church. *All Saints*, originally dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was rebuilt in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This church in turn was replaced in 1880, but the fine Perpendicular tower from the 15<sup>th</sup> century remains. (It is this tower, along with its twin across the river at Putney, which can be seen at the start of the annual boat race.) The tower has a fine peal of eleven bells.

The church contains many furnishings and monuments from the older building, including an Early English font, Jacobean altar rails, and some 15<sup>th</sup> century heraldic glass. The most noteworthy monuments are to Sir William Butts, Chief Physician to Henry VIII who appears in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, and to Thomas Carlos, whose coat of arms on the memorial depicts an oak tree and three crowns

granted to his father who hid with Charles II in the oak tree after the Battle of Worcester.

The churchyard has many fine tombs, most notably those of several Bishops of London, and that of Granville Sharp, prominent in the anti-slavery movement and a founder of the *British and Foreign Bible Society*. It was because of this association with a predominantly non-conformist organisation that the vicar of the time would not allow his funeral sermon to be preached in the church! An amusing headstone to Isabella and Joseph Murr has a typically flowery 18<sup>th</sup> century verse about the wife, but simply says of her husband '*He's gone too*'. A curious feature of many of the graves was a concrete hump, placed there, Vernon informed us, to foil body snatchers. A row of fine 19<sup>th</sup> century almshouses stand just outside the churchyard.

*Fulham Palace* was once a vast moated manor of thirty six acres. The moat was only filled in in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but a section has now been excavated. The

oldest part, on approaching from the entrance, dates from the Tudor period and looks quite cosy round a small courtyard. The oldest room here is the Great Hall. Later additions are composed of three different periods of Georgian architecture, including one in '*Strawberry Hill Gothick*', although some of the more obvious features were later altered. We were able to see dining and drawing rooms, decorated by various bishops and their wives, as well as the library and rooms now turned into a museum and restaurant. There have been several chapels; the latest was built in 1867 by William Butterfield and decorated in his usual colourful style; after bomb damage in the Second World War, the Butterfield style was unfortunately out of favour, and murals now obliterate his decorative brickwork.

The gardens surrounding the palace are a great asset, and provide a setting for relaxation, open air events, and the study of botany: it seemed to be a required qualification that the bishop should be a tree

collector, as there are many exotic and rare trees to be seen. Even when felled, one Cedar of Lebanon, now known as the Bishops' Tree, is adorned with sculptures carved with a chainsaw by Andrew Frost of several former bishops.

All in all we spent an extremely enjoyable day, with thanks again to our guide Vernon, and to Graham Hedges for organising. Fulham Palace and grounds, once the private manor of the Bishops of London, when Bishops were '*Princes of the Church*' and lived accordingly, is now an asset to be enjoyed, both by the residents of Fulham and by visitors wishing to escape from the bustle of London.

**Derek Jowett, BA**, is a retired member of *Christians in Library and Information Services* who lives in Stroud and previously worked for the public library service in *Gloucestershire*.

# 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 three new members. Also listed below are those who have renewed their membership since May. We would greatly appreciate it if payment could be sent before the end of April. If you have changed address, job or e-mail, please let us know as soon as possible.

## NEW MEMBERS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## LATE RENEWALS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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## CHANGES TO ADDRESS, JOB ETC.

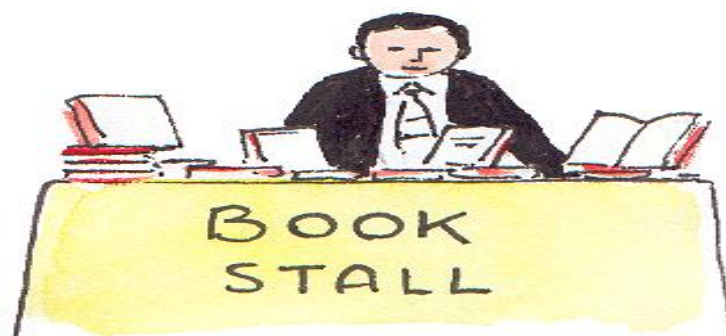
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## REVIEWS

# ***SPEAKING VOLUMES BOOK AWARDS***



*As reported in our previous issue, the winners of the **Speaking Volumes** book awards for 2014 were announced at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Esher, Surrey, on Tuesday 13 May 2014. In this issue two members of Christians in Library and Information Services review the winning titles in the children's and adult categories.*

### ***PROFESSOR BUMBLEBRAIN'S BONKERS BOOK ON THE PARABLES***

***Andy Robb***

***CWR, 2014, £6.99, 100P., Pbk., ISBN 978-  
1853459474***

The cover images of this colourful book speak eloquently about the contents, picturing a cartoon '*mad professor*' on all fours and dressed as a pig to help dramatise the parable of the prodigal son... The inside of the book did not disappoint and my children (a boy aged nine and a girl aged eleven) were very eager to read it and gave it a huge '*thumbs-up*' - which is just as well seeing it was declared a winner at the *Christian Book Awards* 2014.

This '*winning*' volume, like all the others in the series, is

filled with full colour cartoons featuring a very pompous, but kindly, professor who is eager to share the delights of the Bible with his young audience. His jokes are extremely feeble at times and his arrogance pretty overwhelming, but it somehow works to engage the readers! For a slim volume with large fonts and lots of pictures it packs in a lot of facts with the fun (the significance of 'the Kingdom', the Pharisee's reaction to the parables and approximately fifteen parables and their meanings). It gives the Bible references along the way and even takes time to explain the gospel message.

Any Christian book that can get children excited about the Bible has to be a winner, so I am very pleased that this has been recognised as such. Personally I preferred ***Professor Bumblebrain's Bonkers Book on Creation***, but they all follow a similar, fast paced, format. I am now being badgered to buy ***Professor Bumblebrain's Bonkers Book on Prayer***, which is the only title in the series that we do not already own. Another great series by Andy Robb is the "*Fifty ... Bible stories*", as in ***Fifty Weirdest Bible stories***, ***Fifty Goriest Bible Stories*** etc. With titles like that, children ought to be captivated and the good news is they are – mine at least!

**Karen Hans**, BSc, MA, MCLIP, is Librarian of *St. Martin-in-the-Fields High School for Girls* and serves as Prayer Secretary of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

**WHY? LOOKING AT GOD, EVIL AND SUFFERING**

**Sharon Dirckz**

**IVP, £8.99, 176p.; Pbk., ISBN 978-1844746`194**

Suffering must be one of the greatest hurdles to faith and most of us ask *Why?* at some time as so many of the bad things that happen in this world are difficult to reconcile with belief in a loving God.



Sharon Dirckz interweaves her book with five stories of personal suffering and doesn't shirk from talking about her husband's illness and the difficulties it has caused her and her family. The first story is about Frances who lost a daughter who was born with a severe brain abnormality and the wonderful support she and her family received through a very difficult time. Frances felt their faith enabled them to entrust Millie's life to God.

The next chapter explores the attitudes to different belief systems to evil and suffering. Hindus believe the good and evil we encounter are the result of a battle between up to three hundred and thirty million gods. The Buddhist view is that there is no remedy for suffering in this world or any prospect of a future world without suffering. Muslims believe you should be grateful if you suffer as God wishes to test you. Christians believe that God is good, loving and powerful but might also allow suffering.

The second story about personal suffering is about Will, an ex-army officer who lost his first wife and young son in a car accident and how he had to try and help his daughter who survived come to terms with her loss. Charles' story is about the terrible suffering of people in Somalia in the 1990's and to this day and the fragility of life there.

This is followed by a chapter on why God allows natural disasters and diseases with differing views about this discussed.

Rachel was diagnosed with MS in 2002 but went on to have a daughter and she believes that though she can't run now when she meets Jesus face to face she will be able to run.

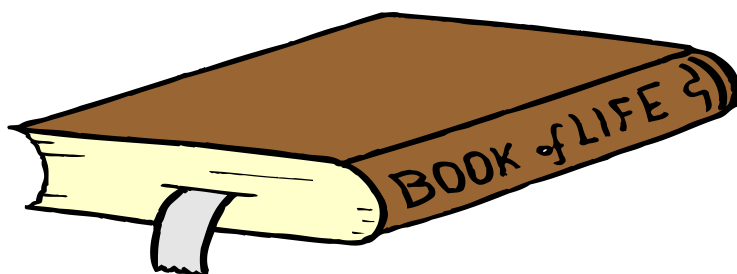
Sharon concludes that even though we don't understand everything about suffering it is still possible to believe in the powerful, loving God while acknowledging the reality of evil and suffering and seeing life from this perspective helps us make more not less sense of our hurting world. I certainly found her book helpful in coming to terms with evil and suffering.

**Anne MacRitchie**, BSc, is Scottish Secretary of *Christians in Library and Information Services* and worked previously in the Library of the *University of Aberdeen*.

## ARTICLE

NEIL HUDSON applauds the role of librarians as “guardians of stories” and shows how our smaller stories can fit into God’s larger story

# ***LOSING THE PLOT BUT TRUSTING THE AUTHOR***



*An Address to “**Moving Forward**”, the Launch Conference of Christians in Library and Information Services, held on Saturday 5 April 2014 in the Chancellor’s Room, Hughes Parry Hall, 19-26 Cartwright Gardens, London, WC1H 9EF.*

I work for the *London Institute of Contemporary Christianity*, formed by John Stott. His concern and the catalyst for the Institute being formed was his keen awareness that it’s quite possible to be a fully-paid up member of a local church and an evangelical believer and yet have no real idea how that world, the world of church and the Bible, actually integrates with the world you find yourself in most of the time. It’s possible for faith to become so privatised that it may do you good as an individual, but not change your practice in any field you’re involved with. We may have personal faith, but it may not change our intrinsic world-view or our engagement with the world.

I've come to the conclusion that some Christians understand more about head covering in Corinth than globalisation and the significance of the Shard in 21<sup>st</sup> century London. And there is a simple reason for that state of affairs: we spend more time in church talking about Corinth than twenty-first century London. In many ways it is so much easier helping people to get to grips with a Mediterranean urban culture two thousand years ago than it is to help one another understand what's happening today.

Stott was so concerned about that, that he wanted to form an institute to enable Christians to think Christianly about the world they find themselves in. We follow in that tradition.

When Mark Greene became the Institute's executive director around fifteen years ago, he brought with him a particular concern for Christians in the workplace. Over the years this concern has developed into one that recognises that the wider question is about how we can enable church leaders to see the workplace not as a special interest group but as our main context for working out our faith.

I spend a lot of time asking church leaders, how can your church context help people to thrive in the place they find themselves in most of the time?

## **Librarians as guardians of stories**

For many of you, your lives have been defined by your place of work, the library. It's all too easy for those of us who have not shared these experiences to become romantically misty-eyed about such a life. I would want to suggest that one of the things you have been to the rest of us is you have acted as "*guardians of stories*" – those narratives that try to make sense of our lives. Someone said: "*I pity the person who never reads for they only get to live one life, but if you read, you read multiples of lives*". We present stories out of the material we have. But these stories are not always simple, and they are not always obvious, and they

do require a slower form of reading.

For myself, it was John Le Carre, who taught me this virtue. Half way through '***Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy***' I realised that despite paying close attention to the plot, I had no idea who the characters were or what they were doing, or why they were acting as they were. It would have been only too easy to set the book aside and move on to something easier to follow. However, I decided that Le Carré must have known what he was doing, and the publisher and editor had read it and made sense of it, so I ought to trust the author more; when I read to the end he did indeed make sense of what in the middle was absolutely disorienting.

Maybe this is a parable; most of us are in the middle of a story, and the art of living that story well is determined by the answer to the question, can we trust the author?

## **Living in the Big Story**

As Christians we believe that we are living in a Big Story. It's a story that is so much more than creation and God's love. That would be no story at all. All stories become interesting at the moment when the status quo is thrust into a moment of disorientation. The Bible has barely got going when we are faced with the moment when temptation is succumbed to and creation is disrupted and frustrated. As readers we are forced to ask ourselves: what was lost, how is it righted, who is the hero, how does it end? What does it mean to live in the midst of it?

As believers this is the story we are invited into. When we surrender to Jesus we realise: that is the coherent point of the big picture. This world is not chaotic; it's not what it was designed to be, but God provides the means through Christ to experience renewed life, and invites people to work with him in his work of ongoing creation and recreation till all things will be wound up in him.

## Making sense of smaller stories

However, this big story is made up of mini-stories. And it's to one of them that I'd like to give some attention. I'd like you to read the first chapter of the story of Ruth. [Ruth 1: 1-22]. It's a well-known story and a rich story. For such a short story, it paints its characters in such detail that it is not hard to imagine them vividly.

And as the Bible was being compiled, this story, all too easily read as a rural idyll, was placed next to one of the most horrific of books, the Book of Judges. The days when the judges ruled were violent and uncertain. In the midst of the darkness what are you called to do? What does it mean to trust God when everything around you is being shaken? In many ways, the Book of Ruth can be read as Naomi's story: a story of desperation, grief, pain, and barrenness. Can anything happen in the midst of emptiness and loss? It's clear to Naomi that it's impossible.

Maybe Ruth has a different perspective; maybe she sees the potential for a different story. Rather than stay in her own country, with her own family, she chooses to be an undefended foreigner in a strange land. You know the story: Ruth takes the worst job, as a new migrant. The phrase that reoccurs is '*as it so happened*'. This is Ruth's world as an undefended migrant and desperate widow. But there is a moment when they say: we'll no longer wear the clothes of the victim – we'll be people that will enable a new story to begin. (Ruth 3)

You know the rest of the story. By the end of the story we see Naomi holding her grandson – that child is the forefather of King David. How did God use undefended people, poor foreigners, to bridge from the dangerous times of the judges to the glorious times? This is a small story in the big story. How many Bible stories begin with barrenness, and in the middle something new emerges? In the Old Testament God delights in saying, let's begin where no one else would dare to begin to believe that anything could happen next. They involve the outsider, the poor. They engage the powerful by subverting the

powers. God is always the principal actor. He's always involved, and it's part of that salvation story.

## **How God delights to work**

I wonder whether there is anything in the way God works that you might want to reflect on as a fellowship as you reflect on your future, at a time when you're asking big questions? What God does is never a replica of the past – it's far more creative and brings newness out of places when people wonder, '*can anything new begin*'? Of course, this is how the Gospels begin the story of Jesus, in the midst of barrenness and virginity, in powerlessness and oppression. This is always the ground in which God does something remarkably, salvifically, new.

Bruce Springsteen has an anthemic song that often closes his live shows called, "*Land of hope and dreams*" in which he reflects on the sort of society we want to be. He begins with the reality and ends with the gospel. It's the move from the Blues to the Gospel. The chorus declares his hope that

I said, on this train, dreams will not be thwarted  
This train, faith will be rewarded  
This train, hear the steel wheels singing  
This train, bells of freedom ringing

Yes, this train carries saints and sinners  
This train carries losers and winners  
This train carries whores and gamblers  
This train carries lost souls

I said, this train carries broken-hearted  
This train, thieves and sweet souls departed  
This train carries fools and kings thrown  
This train, all aboard

Come on this train, People get ready,  
You don't need no ticket,  
You just get on board (people get ready),  
You just thank the Lord

I'd like this as the anthem for my local church. God collects people who are at the bottom, misfits, overlooked, and says, I'll use you – people like Ruth, Naomi, Orpah, Boaz – I'll use you in taking the Big Story from here to there. The gospel changes everything – it's the moment when Jesus steps in and changes the overall story. In a few weeks, at Easter we will relive this story once again and declare to each other '*Jesus has risen!*'

## **There is so much more**

The gospel changed everything, but it is often heard as too thin a gospel. It's more than, "*Jesus will help us when things go wrong*". The gospel is this: God comes and points to people like us and says, "*will you follow me?*" We don't accept the gospel as a means of us enlisting God to help us, He enrolls us on his cause.

What is God doing in you as a fellowship? What might it mean to follow Jesus who is always doing new things? What does it mean to be a disciple if a disciple is someone who's learning to live the way of Jesus in their context at this moment? We never stop learning to be a disciple because the context keeps changing, and for a fellowship like your own, your challenge is to discern what it means for you to be obedient to Christ in these days. The context is certainly very different from the one when you began your journey together in 1976.

Perhaps another example from popular culture might help us know how to face the future. Mike Leigh is a critically acclaimed film-maker. His approach to film-making is markedly different from many others. He will mostly work with a settled group of actors who understand his way of working who he

trusts. Essentially his approach is to work with these actors as they improvise within the constraints of their characters. He does not start by giving them lines to learn, he encourages them to imagine how they would act in character in the various situations that he creates. From these workshops, the script emerges. He trusts that they will find their own voice and be creative.

I think this is how God works - He doesn't send the script down! He forms our character over time and lets us find our own voice. We are called to improvise. So what does it mean to be God's people at work in librarianship? We find ourselves in a new world, modelling godly character, ministering grace and love, moulding a culture to reflect more of God's heart for his world. It means working well for the glory of God, and having the wisdom to know when to speak out for truth and justice and how to speak of the gospel. It's how our lives, these small stories, play into God's big story.

Dr. **Neil Hudson** began working with the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity* as the Church-Life Consultant on the *Imagine* project in 2006 and took over as *Imagine* Project Director in 2010. In 2012, Neil published ***Imagine Church*** that reflected on the lessons that had been learned from working with churches as they engaged with the challenge of developing a culture of whole-life discipleship. Together with Tracy Cotterell, he also published a Grove booklet entitled ***Leading a Whole Life Disciplemaking Church***.

For the previous ten years he worked at *Regent's Theological College*, serving there latterly as its Vice-Principal. His main area of teaching concerned the relationship between the Church and wider society. As well as working for LICC, he co-leads a church in Salford, Greater Manchester.