

# The College of Evangelists



## Winter Newsletter 2016

### College Meetings

The College met in May 2015 at Wilson Carlile Centre in Sheffield, when Rev. Canon Roger Simpson, the Archbishop's Evangelist for the Northern Province, took as his theme: 'Confidence in the Gospel'. We also commissioned 3 new Members – Sunny George, Revd. Margaret Cave and Rt. Revd. Chris Edmonson. Arun Arora, the Director of Communications for the Archbishops' Council, also became a member, though he was unable to be with us for the Commissioning.

We held a Winter Retreat at Holland House in early December (see Ian Silk's reflection later in this Newsletter) which was to have been led by Rt. Revd. Gordon Mursell, but he was unable to get to the venue because of the December floods.

**Stop Press: Stop Press: Stop Press: Stop Press:**

Dates for your Diary

Commissioning Day and Teaching Session

**29<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at Lambeth Palace**

### Members' News

**Mark Russell** is part of the Archbishops' Task Force on Evangelism; here is his update on how the Task Force is progressing:

The Evangelism Task Group (ETG) is looking forward to the February 2016 Group of Sessions of the General Synod of the Church of England when it will make its first report. This report will make a series of suggestions to help make evangelism a greater priority for the Church.

Over the past year the Group has been working on a number of different strands, seeking to work in collaboration with the other strands of the Reform and Renewal agenda.

- Children and young people – The ETG is working with Bristol Diocese to try to pioneer some new youth work that will provide wisdom and learning for the rest of the church to draw on. We are also hoping to appoint a bishop to lead episcopally on evangelism with younger people
- Housing estates – The ETG hopes to gather people with expertise in evangelism on tough housing estates to see what learning can be shared with the wider church

- Training – The Group is working to make ordination training more focussed on evangelism
- Lay Witness – The Group are finding ways to help inspire Christians to be more confident in sharing their faith. They are excited that Church Army has developed a new 6 week course called *Faith Pictures*, this is a free gift to the Church and can be downloaded at [www.faithpictures.org](http://www.faithpictures.org) Archbishop Justin launched this course at the November Synod.

Canon Mark Russell  
December 2015

**Robin Gamble**, author of the START Course, says:

“Over the last fifteen years or so countless numbers have been brought to faith, brought back to faith or simply been helped to renew and enjoy faith in a fresh way through our 'START' courses. Incredibly, over 4,000 churches are still using it. For the past 18 months we have been busy making a brand new 'START' and it is almost ready. This has inevitably been a rather worrying time but now everything is coming together; this last week I have been looking at a lot of the film footage and am really excited. Lots of people are going to love the new material and I believe that thousands more lives will be changed by it. “

*watch out for further news, or speak to Robin at Lambeth on 29<sup>th</sup> May*

**John Hibberd**, Mission Development Advisor for Sheffield and Rotherham, writes:

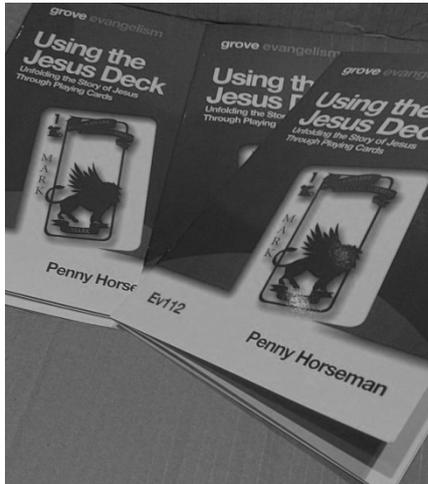
#### **Crossroads Mission – Sheffield Diocese – September 2015**

I was given responsibility to oversee this mission. ‘Four unforgettable days’ was Bishop Steven Croft’s quote after Sheffield Diocese hosted a mission of 20+ Northern Bishops and their teams in early September 2015. Certainly the presence of so many bishops joining together to engage in mission caught the attention of the media and offered us many open doors into secular institutions. It seems to have been a positive and renewing experience for a number of the bishops too.

The approach we took was to devolve planning to deanery level, putting Area Deans / deanery planning teams directly in touch with their visiting Bishop(s). Given that the preparation time was tight, this simplified communication. Very varied programmes emerged, appropriate to their local settings and reflecting the level of resources and experience in each area. Where a Bishop was able to visit in advance, this contributed significantly in developing the programme and encouraging the churches. The mission itself was a huge encouragement to the many churches that participated, with hundreds of events and activities taking place across the diocese including a very moving finale event in Rotherham town centre at which the Archbishop of York preached a powerful evangelistic sermon.

In Sheffield Diocese we are looking to maintain the momentum from this and considering how we continue to engage in direct evangelistic events. Looking at the bigger picture, these diocesan missions with Bishops from the North of England are set to continue – Blackburn (2016), Durham (2017), and Carlisle (2018) being the next hosts.

***Sister Penny Horseman quotes from her new Grove Book:***



“Sometimes an incident has consequences out of all proportion to its size. A casual “Have you seen this?” was like a pebble thrown into a pond that produces ripples that just go on and on. My friend handed me The Jesus Deck, a small box full of colourful playing cards. Unlike nearly all other playing cards each card has an incident from the life, death, resurrection or teaching of Jesus depicted on it hence the name the Jesus Deck.”

This is the opening paragraph of a small new book about an unusual way of sharing the Christian faith. I have been involved with the Jesus Deck for over ten years and I worked on getting it reprinted when worldwide stocks ran out. I have personally found it to be an effective way of sharing faith with a variety of people and am also encouraging its use as a spiritual development tool. After years of running training events and speaking with enthusiasm about it I have finally got round to writing the book at the end of 2015. I now find myself as a published author!

If you want to know more about this – the answer is read the book- “Using the Jesus Deck” published by Grove Books £3.95.

## **New Council Members**

**In December we welcomed 2 new Members to the Council:**

**Rt. Revd. Martyn Snow, Bishop of Tewksbury**

**Revd. Ian Silk**

**Martyn has taken over the role of co-ordinating Members’ prayers and will be in touch with you soon.**

## **Retreat at Holland House – 8 – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015**

As the College of Evangelists we have such a variety of giftings and callings and although we are very much connected in prayer it is not often possible to be in each other’s company for a time of reflection and sharing. Holland House, Pershore was such a comfortable, safe place in which to relax, worship together and hear God’s Word. I have to admit that due to tiredness and Bishop John’s generosity in supplying wine with the first evening meal I couldn’t really tell you what the talk afterwards was about! But over the next two days a theme of great beauty and joy was unfolded as John adapted Gordon Mursell’s notes on Philippians (Gordon had been unable to reach us due to flooding in Scotland). Together we offered gifts of worship, listening, discernment and encouragement as we lived out what it is to be the Body of Christ in our collegiate calling. The vision stays in my mind of a group of friends, a family, colleagues, partners in the Gospel, all for one and one for all and all for the Lord. We were dwelling in the Scriptures and letting the Word of God dwell richly in us.

At the end of our time together we shared what the experience had meant to each of us –

*'connecting with a family'*

*'a safe place to share'*

*'a profound sense of communion and companionship'*

*'dreams'*

*'an opportunity to shut the door, open the window and pray'*

I literally found myself doing that as I spent time in my own room reading 'Wigglesworth – the complete story' by Julian Wilson. At least three of my evangelist friends had shared in the previous weeks how this extraordinary man's life in the power of the Spirit had impacted their own. I decided to read chapters when I was woken in the middle of the night by the sound of the wind outside. I opened my bedroom window for best effect!

With such temperatures it was certainly a Winter Retreat. But we were able to share the green shoots of spring-time in our lives also. We had a balance of silence and conversation which with our varied personalities was more or less successful – what one of my evangelist colleagues calls Healthybalanceville. I might also name such a winter retreat Relax and Refresh. Many thanks indeed to all who organised and cared for us.

*Ian Sílk*