

From Physics to Priesthood



in Berlin wasn't very friendly, so I tried the English Church, St George's. I felt instantly at home in this cosmopolitan congregation, with people from dozens of countries, including many Germans.

"I soon felt a call to full-time priesthood in the Church of England, and the Diocese in Europe sponsored me. I had only made visits to this country before I started training for ministry in 2012.

"I'm in my second year of my training curacy in Marlborough. I love parish ministry, how it allows you to spend quality time with people, often during the most profound times in their lives.

"I still miss practical science, like soldering and fixing machines, so I often do the DIY in church! I keep my scientific brain working by giving talks and mentoring in two local schools.

"I also speak at public debates on science and religion. My usual debate partner is an atheist physics teacher married to a churchwarden. This opens space for more creative conversations on faith than those that dominate the media.

"So does being a young, foreign, female, scientist. I certainly don't fit the stereotype of a market town cleric!"

"I love how the C of E, through the parish system, seeks to serve everyone regardless of their religious views."

Brought up in a non-religious family in a Dutch village, the Rev'd Janneke Blokland's path to priesthood is unique. Asked to come to Sunday School by a friend when aged 7, she kept coming back as she liked it. She was baptised at 18, and studied Physics to PhD level in Nijmegen, near her home. Her research was on 'semiconductor nanostructures'. She laughs at the inevitable blank stare. "It was great fun!", she says, "It involves firing lasers at new materials."

In 2010 she moved to Berlin to carry out further research. "I wanted to explore an academic career. Also, there's nothing like a new country to help you find your real priorities.

"The Lutheran Church I first attended

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Service and Study

"My job is to inspire people to spread the light of Christ."

Rosie Stiven has just begun three years as Diocesan Mothers' Union President. Brought up in a devout Roman Catholic family from Lancashire, she joined the Army at 18. She later married Nick, another soldier. As he was an Anglican, she says, "I sort of followed him over!"

"My career took me to Germany and Belfast, and I ended up Company Commander at an Ammunitions Depot near Oxford. Then Nick was offered a year training at the Pakistani Staff College in Quetta. In 1983, I still had to resign my own commission to join him.

"It was exciting! Just 40 miles from the border during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Quetta was full of refugees. I volunteered at the Red Crescent hospital, and some patients were Mujahadeen fighters smuggled in."

The Stivens later settled in Salisbury, but joined the church choir in Wilton,

where their two children enjoyed youth activities. After a spell as a school secretary, Rosie worked as a bursar, as did Nick after retiring from the Army.

"I had to take Norman Court Prep. School into closure. It was important to do that well but quite bruising. I needed a clean break afterwards, so I studied for an MA in Christian Spirituality at Sarum College. I loved it and it restored me. Superb teaching in an environment of prayer, warmth and welcome.

"I was just finishing off and wondering what God had planned next, when I was asked to consider the MU Presidency!"



Monthly Letter

The Rt Revd Dr Edward Condry
Bishop of Ramsbury

Let's hear it for Churchwardens. And PCC Treasurers, Secretaries, Sidesmen and everyone else who serves the local churches in Salisbury Diocese.

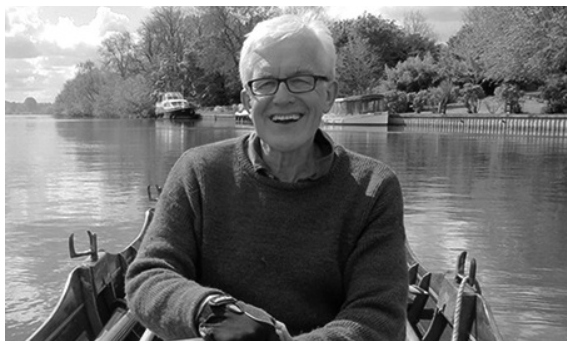
There are about 3000 people who have been called to these offices across the whole diocese. We are approaching the time of year when Annual Parochial Church Meetings are held, and elections happen. So this is the right time to say thank you for all they do.

I was once asked whether I had a theology of administration. Was there any spiritual purpose in efficient administration? I answered that St Paul said that it was one of the gifts of the Spirit, and that good administration meant valuing others, and helping them in their Christian paths.

If I think properly about who should be on a rota then I am thinking about people who will be able to read the word of God with understanding, communicating well. If I ask someone to lead the intercessions it is because I feel that they are able to articulate our deepest feelings and wishes. That's valuing people and their gifts.

Churchwardens and all the people who work for the church are the unsung heroes of the Church of England.

They are very often the focal people in each community whom others know as the representatives of the church, and hence of the Gospel. So, yes, let's hear it for those elected at the APCM. We are all enormously grateful.



And what should we call them collectively? Sometimes people ask me what a bunch of bishops is called. A bench?

For churchwardens perhaps the term we use for goldfinches - "A Charm of Churchwardens". Across the Diocese of Salisbury, the people who quietly witness to Christ.

Three cheers for you all!

Help For Freezing Homes

Do you spend at least 10% of your income on fuel costs? Many households struggle to afford to heat their home over winter. If you are older or disabled your local Community Foundation can give you a grant of £200 to help pay the bills.

Norman from Chippenham said help with fuel bills "has taken a lot of worry from me. I am over 90 years old and have heart trouble. I have to keep the house warm. I feel the cold so much. Your grant has helped me feel comfortable."

If you or someone you know could benefit, please contact the Wiltshire Community Foundation, even if you live elsewhere, on **01380 729 284**.

They will put you in touch with organisations in your area who can help you or someone you know complete an application form.



Charismatic Spiritual Fuel

Village churches aim to cater for all, so mostly have a 'middle-of-the-road' tradition. Country dwellers with a 'high' or 'evangelical' tradition often struggle about whether to go into a bigger town for worship most natural to them, or to support their local parish.

"The Filling Station Network aims to square that circle for Charismatic Christians", says the Revd Daniel Ingles, Curate in the Beaminster Team, "With meetings on weekday evenings, usually in market towns, they feed those who

need to worship in lively and informal ways at least some times. That can encourage them to support a more traditional local church on Sunday."

Learn more or find your local group at www.thefillingstation.org.uk.

