



CONFERENCE SPECIAL REPORT

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Chairs Observations

2019 has been another year of lows and high for the FREC.

The lows first:

We greatly regret the closure of both the Bedfordshire and Leicester RE Centres at the start of the year. We note with sadness and concern the shrinking network the Federation represents. At a time when the RE Commission Core Report has raised the debate about RE on the national stage those of us that plug away steadily to support those in the front line in schools and parishes locally continue to try to keep our Centres open and our morale up.

The highs include the good news is that those of us that remain are invested and continuing to find new and better ways of supporting those with whom we work. This is on a local practical level and, sometimes, on the national stage. What was an Annual Conference is now bi-annual but it was certainly worth the wait! You will see from the articles and pictures contained in the newsletter that we had some superb personal and professional experiences.

It was stimulating to see how the two Centres in Winchester operate and I remain in awe of the organisational, completer/finisher skills of our colleague Lydia Revett who did so much to make the Conference a success. We had a virtual tour of the RE World from a philosophical and pedagogical point of view with Dr Pat Hannam and an opportunity to learn from a great deal of good practice in the many places we visited. I sincerely hope that enough of us remain that this event may be repeated in another venue in 2021.

As with any network, ours will only ever be as strong as the commitment of our members makes it. I am grateful for the continuing professionalism, enthusiasm and strength each of you offers.

With best wishes
Karenza



The Conference Organiser's Reflections

Having sent 'hold the date' emails for this year's FREC conference in March 2018, my heart sank in March this year, when my conference collaborator William Cole (Winchester Diocesan Resources Room) advised me that his circumstances had changed and he was leaving the area. [Of course, we wish him all the very best!]

Having collectively decided to proceed with the conference should there be enough interest, it was a matter of encouraging sufficient delegates to sign up to make it viable. So I was delighted when it was declared viable, even though the organisation fell single-handed to myself; not the original plan!

I shouldn't have worried at all ... with delegates coming from as far afield as Durham, Nottingham, Hereford and Petworth, it was such a positive gathering of like-minded folk. We met for lunch in Winchester Cathedral's refectory and then Valerie Woodward talked to us in William's absence about her use of the Diocesan Resources Room. We browsed the shelves, opening boxes and comparing notes. I'm hopeful that William's successor will be recruited and in place before too long.



WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL
Diocesan Resource Room

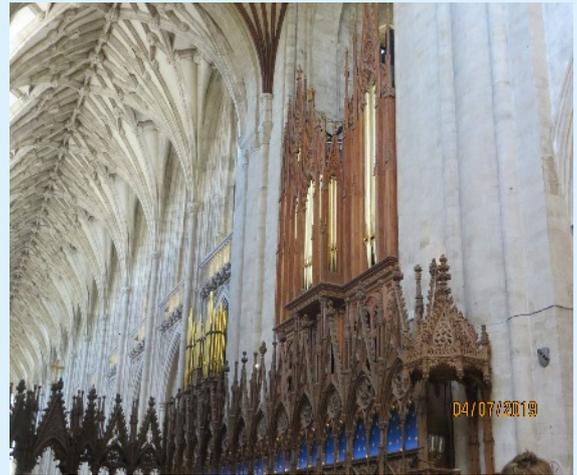
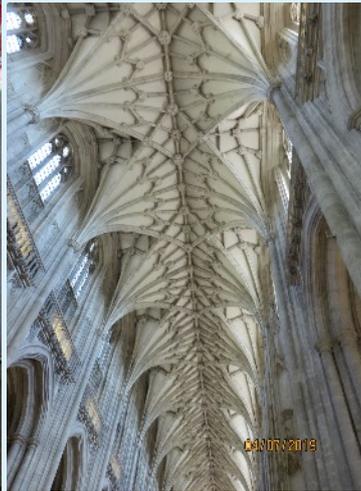


Cheryl Bryan, Winchester Cathedral Education Officer, was kind enough to show us the Cathedral's relatively new Learning Centre and facilities for education on the Cathedral's history as well as RE. She spoke to us about the sort of workshops and activities she runs with children of all ages and young adults.





We then had a guided tour of Winchester Cathedral with Annie Arkwright, which was truly inspirational. I have been many times, and Annie managed to bring the Cathedral to light in so many new ways. The highlight was our visit to the Cathedral crypt to see Anthony Gormley's Sound II statue which I absolutely love – the peace and joy produced by a modern piece of art in absolutely the right physical context.



We then had a cup of restorative tea, with some networking – such an important part of these conferences, when many of us are lone workers.

Some delegates went to evensong service at the Cathedral, and then we re-grouped for supper in a restaurant in Winchester, before settling into our relative hostelries for the night.



The following morning was based at the County RE Centre, one of the very few remaining local authority resource centres still in action. I explained how our operation works, and how we support RE in Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight and some London Boroughs, that have adopted our agreed syllabus *Living Difference III*.

Obviously there was a fair amount of browsing too!



Chris Boxley had brought along a fascinating file on the origins of FREC – going back to 1978 when the organisation was called *The National Consultation of RE Centres*; more of this in his article elsewhere in this newsletter.



Patricia Hannam, County Inspector/Adviser for RE, history and philosophy, briefed us on how RE is supported in the area and there was a lively discussion about the current world of RE.

We held a short FREC business meeting, when Sean presented his finance and membership report. I should here thank Karenza, Sean, Simon and her team involved in enabling FREC to continue. It is in very good hands.

After lunch we bade our farewells and travelled homewards. Thank you to those who made it to Winchester this year, and to those who didn't, we missed you!



Lydia Revett
Hampshire County RE Centre Manager



Reflections on a First FREC Conference

I attended my first FREC event this July and I would like to say how welcomed and included I felt. It was an enjoyable and really interesting experience.

We visited the beautiful historic Winchester Cathedral, their Education Centre and Resources Room. The next day we spent at the Winchester Resources Centre with the lovely Centre Manager Lydia Revett.



Last of all we were given an insightful talk by the Hampshire County Inspector Adviser for RE (and a few other subjects!) Dr Patricia Hannam. She explained the history of the Hampshire Re syllabus and the local and national pressures and trends on Religious Education as their syllabus had evolved.



During the conference I learnt about the different pressures that the centres in the Federation are under and how our centres in the North East of England differ - for one thing we cater to a much wider audience. I developed my understanding about why and how we design our teachers notes the way we do.



The goals became very clear for me. In a climate where a great deal of education seems to be driven by facts and regurgitation, we can't let that be the same for RE because Re isn't just 'facts'. It's about the reasoning, and the greater understanding of faiths, that lie behind the facts that we aim to educate people about. It's about translating the lessons in RE into something children can take away from to use in their own lives.

I don't tend to think about the bigger picture very often, I just plug away at the list of my every day jobs that I do. But this trip allowed me to stand back and see how interconnected we all are, how we can help each other and how doing this job is providing our members with some excellent service and brilliant teaching resources!

Rachel Wilson pictured with Sean on their travels South from Durham

FINANCIAL REPORT

Sean the Treasurer of FREC gave a report on the finances which has been circulated to members during the business meeting where it was agreed to increase the nominal Membership Fee for full members (from £10 to £15 per annum) to cover expenditure. The fee for Associate members would remain at £10



Reflections from Chris Boxley - The history of the DFederation

I was very pleased to be able to attend the social and business session of this year's Conference and to do some thing I have been threatening to do for years – dig out my back numbers of information and files on the meeting from early days in the story of RE Resource Centres.



My papers go back to 1977 with the birth of the Consultation of Religious Education Resource Centres.

I recall that there were three or four main institutions from which the movement emerged – Church House, Westminster, BFSS in West London, West Hill, and early centres involved were King Alfred, Winchester, Bishop Otter, Chichester, All Saints Bristol.

I have handed all the papers to Lydia and she and her staff have kindly offered to record for posterity this archive. I know this is a long term operation and will be happy to visit the centre to collaborate if and when asked!

The meeting itself was refreshing and it is good to see the RE Resource Movement is active and effective, even though numbers involved are not what they were. I was reassured to learn that in Hampshire and elsewhere the operation of RE Resource centres is an important part of supporting and maintaining the work of SACREs.

Lydia and all at the Hampshire Resource Centre are to be congratulated on running a very efficient and valuable resource for all involved in RE in Hampshire and elsewhere.

I have a little more homework myself – to sort out the papers on the founding and activities of the Midhurst and Petworth Religious Studies Resource centre which I started in 1977. I hope I can make them into a useful archive for future years.

Thank you all for a most enjoyable gathering.



FAITH EXPERIENCES from the Nottinghamshire RSREsource Centre

Over the academic year we have visited 15 schools, some of whom we have visited for more than one day working with 2,500 young people bringing a religious faith into their classroom. For the first time ever we have had to turn some requests down as we could not fit them in. In fact some schools after an initial visit have requested more days in the coming year!

Teacher evaluations include:-

“It was a fantastic day, the children really enjoyed learning about & experiencing Jewish festivals.”

The faith experience was immersive & engaging – the children loved it & were excited to talk about what they had experienced.

A very interactive session which engaged all the children.

What a fantastic experience. A class of challenging pupils were ‘hooked’ and enthralled, taking in new experiences & enjoying recalling the old!



Did you know...?

This is a Labyrinth not a Maze!

Labyrinths and mazes have been around since prehistoric times, in wall paintings, Roman mosaics or even painted on the floor of Cathedrals.

A maze has a separate entrance and exit, but a labyrinth has only one. This is because you are not meant to get lost in a labyrinth! A maze is a puzzle but a labyrinth is used for meditation and pilgrimage.

 WINCHESTER
CATHEDRAL

