

Spring 2016 Newsletter



Federation of RE Centres

Letter from the chair:

Our overnight conference in November in Durham proved an enjoyable and valuable opportunity to meet up with old and new colleagues from the world of RE. From the splendour of Durham Cathedral, with its fascinating head of collections Lisa Di Tommaso explaining the exciting £10 million Open Treasure project, and showing us some very precious books from the collection,



Illustration from Durham Cathedral Library, N.1a.9: William Hamilton, 'Campi Phlegraei: observations on the volcanoes of the two Sicilies', Naples, 1776.

'Reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral'

to the inspirational and varied work done by Karenza Passmore and her team at the two-centred North East Religious Resources Centres, it was a really worthwhile couple of days. Mindful of how difficult it is to escape from our centres at times, I must say once again that I found the effort to be definitely beneficial! Our sincere thanks and gratitude must go to Sean Smith for organising the conference, for his kindness in looking after us so well, and to Karenza for her time, energies and guidance over the two days. Mel has written an article describing her conference experience.

At our business meeting it was agreed that Veronica Elks (Bath and Wells) should take up the position of Vice Chair of the Federation, Sean Smith (NERRC) has taken over as Treasurer, Stephanie Maddison (NERRC) responsibility for the membership and subscriptions, Mel Wilson-Claridge (Ludlow) as minute secretary and Ken Johnson's (Nottingham) work on newsletters was formally recognised. I cannot say how grateful I am to these wonderful people for taking up these roles within the organisation and for taking the pressure off my shoulders.

I look forward to continuing to represent the Federation at RE Council meetings with Chris Boxley (Midhurst), and cascade information from these meetings to you, as well as represent your views in RE Council consultations. From recent emails, you will also have gathered that I have been in touch with Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, CEO of the RE Council, regarding the involvement of member organisations as part of the review of the legal and wider framework for RE. I will keep you informed on developments

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Federation Directory

Since our last newsletter, Emma McVittie (York St Johns University) has been appointed to the board of the RE Council and is actively involved in their work.

In this newsletter you will find a spotlight on the Bath and Wells Diocesan Resource Centre. It is fascinating to read from Veronica the focus of her work in the Diocese, parishes and schools, and the evident enjoyment and fulfilment it brings. If you would like your centre featured in a future edition of this newsletter, please contact Ken.

We are hoping to arrange an overnight conference once again in Durham in the Summer of 2016. The location was proposed in order to encourage some more of the northern centres to join us, as well as enable our new officers from the NE Religious Resources Centres to be there. We would really like to see you there; it would be brilliant to continue the vital networking function of our organisation.

Many thanks to those who support the Federation – with its finances, membership, subscriptions, newsletters and minute-taking, and to Dave Mohan for his ongoing support maintaining our website.

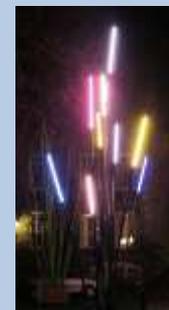
I look forward to seeing you.

With best wishes

Lydia



Durham was so pleased to welcome the Federation of RE Centres that they turned on spectacular lights for us!



Reflections from our hosts

Sean Smith reflects on the visit of the Federation

We were delighted to be able to host the FREC Annual Conference for 2015. In a really challenging climate for religious and theological education it was wonderful to be able to share news, ideas and learn about good practice across the country.

I was particularly interested to learn more about the work that Ken Johnson does with the schools in his area. Our centre would not be able to provide the kind of service that he does but it was great to learn about it and be inspired by his expertise and dedication.

When some centres are facing threats to their futures Religious Resources Centre Director, Karenza Passmore, was keen to point out how lucky she felt to be in her role in the North East; "I am very aware that our Centre is incredibly privileged because of the support we receive from our funding body, the St Hilda and St Bede Trust, who have allowed us to become the largest Religious Resources Centre of its kind in the Federation. Because of the support we can achieve things that other Centres may find too difficult to resource but we hope that in doing what we do we can support other Centres and share best practice. It is also wonderful for us to be able to hear about what other members of the Federation are doing so we can learn about new ways of working and continue to develop our own practice."

The programme was planned around our new Durham premises of the Religious Resources Centre and how this site works in conjunction with the city in a wider setting.

When viewing the centre it was evident that although we have an Anglican foundation we also engage with other denominations and faiths.



The Bishop of Durham with Bishop Gothart Maggaard, Bishop of Schleswig and Holstein at the Centre

Lisa Di' Tomasso, Head of Collections, very kindly gave a discussion about Durham Cathedral Library's collections; its purpose and how it serves the community. Lisa also provided a fabulous exhibition from the Cathedral's own historic collections which led onto a very interesting overview of *Open Treasure* – a initiative to open up closed areas of the Cathedral and make the historic collections more accessible for visitors.

We were also privileged to welcome David Bryan from the Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership. David talked with delegates about the importance of resourcing theological education - focusing mainly on the further and higher aspects of education and how the Religious Resources Centre has a vital very active role in supporting this.

This was my first time as FREC Conference organiser and host, and I really enjoyed the experience. Seeing the conference through from the planning to the final stages has been a privilege. During the conference I was able to see the hard work I had put into the site move appreciated, in a non-direct way, which was one of those cherished moments for me and learn more about the wider community of the federation. As I take up my role as Treasurer and my colleague, Stephanie, becomes Membership Officer we look forward the future and to hosting the 2016 conference in the north east.

Mel Wilson-Claridge, from the Ludlow Centre muses on our time in Durham ...

FREC ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2015 held at the North East Religious Resources 'the largest centre in England' on 10 November 2015

Four centres attended this enlightening and entertaining meeting, Ken Johnson from Nottingham, Veronica Elks from Bath and Wells, Lydia Revett from Hampshire and Mel Wilson-Claridge from Hereford, along with our hosts from Durham.



Upon our arrival at Durham railway station, we were met by Sean Smith (who works at the Resources Centre); he became our mother hen for the trip ensuring that we were in the right place at the right time and generally shepherding us around in grand style.

Sean drove us to Resources Library where we had a good look at their wonderful selection of items for religious study. Besides books on all subjects, there were Prayer boxes, puppets for all faiths, Godly Play boxes and many other very exciting things on offer to Durham Diocese.

After a filling lunch we did a bit of networking and Karenza told us about the development of the Centre and their future plans. Today the RRC has over 1,300 members, 37,000 individual resources for loan and there are 8 members of staff (all of whom are part-time). Their budget is in excess of £110,000 with financial support, from the St Hilda and St Bede Trust.

We then went on to Durham Cathedral and visited their Library's modern collection. Lisa Di' Tomasso, their Head of Collections gave us an interesting talk on their collections and (for some of us) showed us a treasure of the collection the ink well seen in Harry Potter. Durham was used during filming the Potter films.



Durham Cathedral, the greatest Norman building in England, perhaps even in Europe was one of Britain's first World Heritage Sites. It is the burial place of both St Cuthbert and the Venerable Bede, author of the first English history.

We hit the gift shop and discovered an incredible fund raising idea of the Cathedral building being reconstructed in Lego Bricks which were sold for £1 a brick. Others of us wandered around the beauty of the Cathedral and saw the tombs of Bede and St Cuthbert.

Thanks to Ken for his excellent guided talk of the various features of the Cathedral.

After that it was a quick journey back to the Premier Travel Inn where we were all staying and then out to dinner at Zizzi's restaurant in the city centre. Where one of us had a very interesting choice of food and a very large glass of wine, to ease the aching feet, of course. After an excellent meal we returned to our hotel, no doubt Karenza and Sean must have fallen into their respective beds exhausted with looking after our group so well.



The next morning we met for breakfast and then back up to the Resources Centre for our business meeting. Yes we did actually do some work during our trip.



After our meeting we went back down to the library where Elizabeth Baker – Spirit in Stone education officer - kindly gave us an informal presentation on her 'Church Explorer' boxes as Miranda Threlfall-Holmes was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health.

Then yet even more food in the form of a huge lunch at the Stonebridge Inn where the Revd Dr David Bryan, Vice Principal of the Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership explained about the Importance of Resourcing theological education and on Lindisfarne which was very interesting.

Our thanks go out to Karenza Passmore and her wonderful team, Simon Webb, Rachel Wilson and the incomparable Sean Smith for organising such an interesting conference, making us feel so welcome and so well fed.

Those of you who missed this trip may get a chance to do it again next year when possible trips to Holy Island and the award winning Beamish Museum are being thought about.



Welcome to
north east
Religious Resources
your religious learning resources centre



borrow and
learn from us
www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk

Focus on a Religious Education Centre in the Federation

Bath & Wells Diocesan Resource Centre

The Diocesan Resource Centre in Wells has undergone a change over the past year. The Centre moved into another room at The Old Deanery which meant there was a need to cull a selection of unused books so we downsized. The new space is a living and breathing nurturing hub for those who visit.

We have recently updated to a new software programme from MLS, named Eclipse.net for our books and artefacts which will cover our needs for many ongoing years. [For those interested MLS: Eclipse.net](#) - is web based and completely backed up and run by MLS.

Borrowers can access our catalogue, request books and artefacts, leave a review and renew borrowed items themselves, all on line under the new software package.

Teachers, parishioners, clergy and all attending meetings at The Old Deanery are welcomed and introduced to the centre especially those attending our Education courses. We have a close link with our Schools' advisers and also our Parish Youth & Children's advisers and support their work and events. Key Stage Unit boxes are loaned to schools which support the units within the Somerset RE curriculum and also artefact boxes covering other faiths.



The Resource Centre is often the first port of call for information. Following information days run from our School of Formation for Readers and Church wardens, it is lovely to liaise with them again when back in their parishes. Clergy visit when attending IME days and being a stone's throw from the Cathedral clergy and parishioners often combine visits.

The Resource Centre has a role of mission to those who use it providing space and information for those wishing to study and explore the Christian faith. Fines are not requested but borrowers are asked to stay in touch to renew items, which they do. Visitors will come in to talk and often ask for prayer. Also on occasions Morning Prayer is said on a Wednesday within the Resource Centre for those working at The Old Deanery.

One of the joys has been when a representative from a rural church primary school visits with the local vicar or a parish link person together with a parent from the school's PTA. They come to see what we have to support the Collective Worship in the church school. Books are borrowed for an extended time and a plan is drawn up to cover future festivals and/or weekly assemblies. The Resource Centre provides a place for them to come together and explore. An example of parish and school working together.

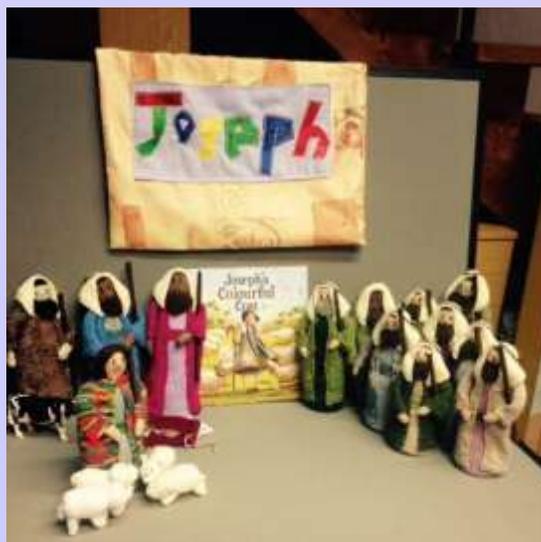
I would like to express my deep appreciation to our key sponsor, St Matthias Trust, without whom none of this would be possible. Also, my sincere thanks to the Diocese of Bath & Wells.

*“Our Diocesan Resource Centre is here to help and serve all.
Ask and we will help, as sharing knowledge is what we do through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Veronica Elks, Manager



Figures knitted and made by members of the Mothers' Union, used by our church schools and parishes through Godly Play.



Boxes of exploration

Churches in the dioceses of Durham and Newcastle now have access to a new resource to enable them to encourage more primary school visits.



A set of 12 explorer boxes have been given to 50 historic churches in the North East as part of a project called Spirit in Stone.

The project, an initiative of Inspired North East, was funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery fund, with financial support from both dioceses.

The project wanted to make these resources available to as many churches as possible so 2 additional boxes were produced and are housed, and managed, by the North East Religious Resources Centres in Durham and North Shields.

This means that any church can borrow a box to use with a school group, children's group or uniformed organisation.

The boxes contain a range of resources designed to fire children's imagination and encourage them to engage with their local church in a new way. Housed in a sturdy, plastic crate are a series of smaller boxes and folders; all waiting to be explored. These include:

- binoculars to encourage children to look at details, such as carvings, on ceilings or for hidden stories in stained glass windows
- torches, which allow children to look in "dark" corners, at details on carvings and to shine a spotlight on something they want to tell others about
- grotesque masks that encourage the children to think about all the things the church has witnessed over the years; they look for a face (in a window, or on a carving) and imagine what it might have seen, heard and smelled in all the years it has been in the church
- bags of materials, including wood, marble, stone and fabric, which encourage the children to look at what the church is built, and furnished, from
- eye spy cards to help the children to find different features of the church
- colour paddles that introduce children to the concept of light and colour in church, both in stained glass and on such things as altar frontals. Activity sheets encourage them to think how colour affects the mood of the building and they can then design their own stained glass window
- window outlines, which encourage the children to find something interesting, whether it is a detail on a carving or a particular part of the church, and then "put it in the picture". They can then draw, or talk about their choice.

The boxes were created for Spirit in Stone by Elizabeth Baker, a professional storyteller and heritage education consultant. Elizabeth drew on her background in teaching and cathedral and museum education to create the resource.

Explorer boxes are intended to support RE, History and English – with lots of opportunities for children to talk about what they find. Whilst the boxes can be used as a self-led activity by a school or group, Elizabeth wanted to encourage church volunteers to be as involved as possible in future school visits so that schools understand that the church is a living, place of worship, not a museum.

To achieve this, the project ran a series of training workshops, led by Elizabeth. These looked at developing skills to enable volunteers to work with school groups; how to create resources for schools and families and how to use the explorer boxes. Elizabeth also encourages volunteers to use stories as part of the explorer box activity; either local stories; stories linked to the church or Bible stories. She feels it is a way for volunteers to engage with children without them feeling anxious about leading a tour or “needing to know everything” – something many volunteers expressed as a concern when considering working with children.

The church explorer boxes have already been used in several churches and are receiving very positive feedback from schools and church volunteers. Elizabeth hopes they will encourage more schools in the North East to visit their local church. She is particularly delighted that the North East Religious Resources Centre is able to house and manage some of the boxes, as they have the expertise and creative vision to ensure they will reach as many schools and churches as possible.



For more information about the Spirit in Stone project please visit the website: www.spiritinstone.info

For more information about the explorer boxes, including how to create your own, please contact Elizabeth Baker.

Elizabeth specialises in Christian and historic storytelling and also creates resources, and delivers training, to support teaching Christianity.

Contact her via email: elizabeth.baker@tillytootales.co.uk
or visit her website: www.tillytootales.co.uk



News from Member Centres

A few words from Gloucester:

The Diocese of Gloucester RE Resource Centre has recently launched new web pages, with a page for each unit/topic including guidance on lesson planning, links to relevant web content and resource lists, designed to support our Local Agreed Syllabus for RE. Our aim is to develop a “hybrid” service, offering information, downloads and web links alongside the physical resources which are available to borrow.

We have also started a “Click and Collect” service: teachers are able to pick from the list of relevant resources for each RE unit, so that they are getting the resources that are most useful to them.

Our newly re-furbished RE room (pictured) includes a seating area for our borrowers to spread out whilst browsing resources, allowing them to have a really good look at what’s on offer and to select the resources that best meet their needs.



Hannah Hauxwell

Nottingham RSResource Centre

Having now settled into the Vine Community Centre in Nottingham we have continued to offer loans and faith experiences. We have now taken experiences into Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire as well as Nottingham City and County. We have worked with just under 3,000 young people in their schools. Having supported the launch of the New Agreed syllabus, we have run workshops on British Values and RE for head teachers. 2016 sees us going into Lincolnshire for more experiences and delivering staff inset on British Values. We still work with Nottingham Inter faith Council.



Federation of RE Centres Directory

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