

## CSCS NEWS

The newsletter of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality

36

Spring 2009

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### Editorial

*Anthony Woollard*

As usual at this time of year, this issue focuses on the outcomes of our Annual Conference and AGM in February. Yet again, it seems, we have drawn back (or been dragged back by the Spirit?) from the brink of resigned self-annihilation. Yet again we seem to have been persuaded that there is still work for us to do, if we can only find people to do it.

With only very light editing, I reproduce below the warm, witty and wise words of Clare Herbert's address to the Annual Conference. At one point she refers to Harry Williams as one of her inspirations. When, in the future life of a more inclusive Church, the works of that great experiential theologian are put together in the manner of the prophecies attributed to Isaiah, perhaps Clare's contributions to our thought will be added on as a sort of deuterio-Harry.

I also include the formal minutes of the AGM, the Chair's Report and the accounts. As will be seen, the Chair and Treasurer are firmly planning to lay their burdens down; and we continue to have no Secretary as such, the functions of such an officer being performed on a very ad hoc basis by other Committee members. The meeting, which was attended by quite a few guests, indeed produced one new member for CSCS who promptly joined the Committee! Nevertheless, our future clearly depends **either** on our finding yet one or two others who are prepared to take on some small responsibilities on the Committee, **or** on absorption into some larger organization which can take our remit forward.

For this reason, you will find in these pages a **questionnaire** to which I must ask **all** CSCS members to respond. This is not a formal poll of members on a proposal to wind up the organization, but simply an opportunity to indicate where members' priorities lie. If just a handful of people ask for the organization to continue **and** are prepared to help it to do so as committee members, then we may decide at the next AGM to carry on. If not, not.

But in the meantime, our continuing usefulness seems to have been proved by the highly successful start, at a meeting on 16 March, of our network with theological educators. Only four out of nine invitees were able to join us on this first occasion, but we made a good start in identifying issues of formation of ordinands for the difficult work of dealing with sexual diversity in Church and society. It is evident that, despite the current constraints (at least in the Anglican and Roman traditions) on addressing the questions

openly, there is a great desire in many theological colleges to do so and find mutual support in doing so. It would be premature to say what will come out of this work, but we meet again – hopefully in a larger grouping – in September. And, alongside this, work continues on the proposed *Consuming Passions* conference to be held jointly with Inclusive Church in 2010, to which reference is made in the Chair’s Report below.

Whatever the outcomes of our review of our own future and of these other activities, CSCS is clearly moving into a new stage of its existence. Will you continue to support us?

### **“SINGING IN THE RAIN”**

*Clare Herbert*

The “rain” in this address is the sexual orientation known as lesbian or homosexual, and its growing acceptance in our secular culture, as recently demonstrated by the civil partnerships legislation from which some of us are benefiting. We know that things are different in small towns, up north and in rural areas of our country, but in most cosmopolitan centres we have gay friends, we know gay priests living openly, some of whom we rejoice to know live in committed partnerships. At a deeper level the rain is our starting to understand that homosexuality is part of us all, and as an important part of us all, to be carefully considered and reflected over, rather than rejected and pushed away.

That is the raining that is going on as far as I can tell – not just in Soho, where it is raining rather a lot, and where I was the Rector when I did a lot of this thinking – but everywhere. And acknowledging that it is raining seems to be freeing people up not for orgies – but for companionship, laughter, going to Church, feeding the cat, looking after children, leading choirs and planning day-care for elderly relatives. As a central London priest who is my friend once said to me – darling if only they knew it’s not so much about S and M as M and S! But anyway, **it is** raining, if I am not much mistaken.

Of course some parts of our Church pretend that it is not raining, or not raining enough as to worry about. They usually smile a lot. Other parts of our Church know it’s raining but decide to try to put the Church under a huge Centre-Parc-type roof so that they do not have to feel the rain. They smile a lot too, but with real worry that the dome above them may leak or collapse. Yet other parts do a sort of war dance in the rain, swizzling their umbrellas and ranting that everyone must enjoy the rain equally, that homosexuality is not really difficult for anyone to accept. Come on in – of course the water’s lovely!

This talk is about my own acknowledging that it’s raining, and learning to sing in the rain.

When I met with Inclusive Church trustees just before applying for my present post I asked them what they thought Inclusive Church is for and they said “The transformation of the world.” They then asked me to think about what sort of Church we are aiming at creating once acceptance of women and gay and lesbian people in equal relationships with men and heterosexual people is here. What is the real point of what we are trying to

do? It was clever of them to ask me to think about that because the vision I formed then sustains me in my work now.

Few would doubt that we need to transform the world to become less a place of oppression, gross injustice and violence to become more a place of well-being, equality and peace, but how do we get there? Many would agree that we need to create peaceful sustainable life-styles for as many as possible on this earth, but where to begin?

In the Church of England we have to ask what is it about the ways that we speak and live which help us make that peaceful sustainable life-style for ourselves and for others and what might it be about the way we speak and live which destroys our being able to move towards peace. The work of Inclusive Church is urgent because of its insistence that we need to look at all paths to peace, all the ways in which we live in disharmony and I was pleased to receive in the summer, via inclusive Church, papers about what was going on in Palestine and the Lebanon at the time. That information and view sharing seemed as important as anything I am more usually doing about equality for women and for gay people in the Church – we need to look at the whole.

The most frightening thing for me about the divided Church is that it seems to be giving up on the human struggle for real peace and settling instead for the creation of order – building the Centre Parc dome over “orderly church” and excluding the rest. Order in human living comes as a result of the struggle of people for real peace in their lives or in the life of their group but not as something which can be imposed to keep chaos at bay. And it never lasts very long – order – it is not a permanent state. As we are seeing chaos breaks out and needs facing as a creative force rather than feared as purely and permanently destructive. At least that is my experience, from which I will now speak.

For me the transformation of the world begins with the transformation of the self. I approach the questions “how to transform the world” and “is it worth it”, by means of my own story.

I grew up in a wild and windswept part of North Devon, at a time when the *Guardian* described it as the most isolated part of England, more so even than Northumberland. The tiny market town at the centre of my life in my formative years had one bus out a week so we made life happen there, entertained ourselves and went to Church a lot! By the age of 10 I was entering regional Bible quizzes where I swear I learnt whole books of the OT off by heart to answer and thought no more about it. Church was the other place you went if you weren't pub, Church was youth club, Church was community. By the time I had gone through university, reading theology and loving it, and theological college, I knew a lot about the Gospel! That is I knew the words, of love, salvation, forgiveness, new life, but I was dead inside. I had a sense of the centre of my body being shaped like a coffin. I knew from looking around me what the words of salvation should mean but I didn't know what they meant in any sense which brought me joy and hope.

In my first job as a deaconess and university chaplain in Bristol I met Professor Denis Nineham, and began to talk to him. He obviously thought I was far too churchy for my

own good and started to talk to me about giving the Church a break. As I struggled to see how I was going to survive he said: “Theology needs a dancing partner to bring it to life – if the Church is going to go on treating women as badly as it does, you should get out and do something different. Find the dancing partner for your Theology.”

I didn't do much with this phrase for a while but it slowly began to alter my life. I changed my life-style, became a social worker and entered in to psycho-analysis. In psychoanalysis and psychodynamic counselling I found the dancing partner to theology for me which would eventually bring me the good news of the Gospel – of relating, love, forgiveness and of courage, of discipline, of reaching out to the others in my life in real rather than bogus ways.

Psychoanalysis taught me to distinguish rain from sun, to be able to tell the truth a bit more. It helped me see that my growing up had been far from easy and that trying to believe, while it had given me a community to grow up in, had also taught me to think everything would be wonderful if I tried a bit harder to believe more. Finding it difficult to walk down the road one day, ironically on my way to deliver a lecture on pastoral theology, I knew that the words weren't working. It was the practice of psychoanalysis over years which gave me the liberty of living and loving as my own self, that living and loving which the Good News of Jesus and his Church talk about.

And I suppose that experience of the gap between the words of theology and life as I knew it taught me to beware any Gospel or words from the Church which might imply we need nothing else to understand and live a good and happy life. For me that whole idea had proved confusingly and frighteningly useless.

**So, to summarise, to be people who transform the world we need to develop as people in whom theology dialogues with other subjects, other people, other disciplines, not just our own – with feminism, ecology, politics, philosophy, biology, psychology, film, whatever – Faith, to bear fruit which is alive and offers life, needs a dancing partner!**

As the layers of what I had been unprepared to feel dropped away, I found of course that I am a woman and that I am gay, wanting both to live with a partner and be ordained as a priest all within a Church which didn't want to talk about being either a woman or gay let alone both! Any ordinary mortal, aware of their own fragility with more honesty and grace than I am, would have given up at that stage, would have not gone for ordination as a priest when I was after all already about 40! But you see I had been captivated by the Jesus figure at a very young age, and had known the strength of a church which almost certainly saved me from terrible loneliness and possibly from mental breakdown when I was young. I was hooked – Called to be a priest and testing that calling honestly with Bishops, with a very strong vision of the Church as actual and theological community. Called into a paradoxical way of life, I was ordained.

Luckily for me another wise figure hove into view at the time. Monica Furlong helped me to explore being both gay and a woman as I went through my early years as a priest. She

helped me to see that it was being gay which was the sand in the oyster of my life as a priest, which might produce a pearl, eventually, if I let it. If I tried neither to extricate the sand from my life nor get out of the oyster shell something of worth might come (though the temptation to do both at times has led me a merry dance, taking me very near thresholds of vicious uncertainty about myself and near breakdown of either me or my career). What is that pearl?

The pearl is learning to individuate from the Church as Institution and yet remain working within it as a free and healthy person calling other people to freedom and health. The grit in the oyster, never being one with the Church's teaching, has eventually allowed me to be able to see the Church from my own viewpoint, to be sufficiently separate from it to establish my own inner authority of voice and life-style, to individuate from the Church to be my own person who is priest and woman and gay.

What the Church of England appears to ask of its most successful, priests is fusion between that priest and the needs of the institution. In its most so-called successful priests I see the picture of one who assumes that it is OK to work all the time. I see one who is at the beck and call of the parish as if the parish were one's family. I see one for whom a contract and set hours off is somehow not necessary as it is for ordinary mortals. I see one who derives energy and purpose from the favour of a Father-figure Bishop, in whom greater authority apparently resides than within the self. "Not my will but Thine, oh Lord" becomes interpreted as a lack of separation between the priest figure and the demands of the institution – as if all that the priest is, is priest, not a number of different figures with competing and complementary demands within the one self which is what I believe being fully human is.

What I am not saying here is that everyone needs to be out, or that being a closet gay or lesbian within the Church is wrong – people make decisions about what they can manage at any one time in their lives with care and sense. What I am saying rather is that the silencing of gay and lesbian priests and people is very wrong – because it does not allow us to explore, discover or speak from the position of our own authority, that authority wrested out of our own dialogue between being captivated by Christ and gay.

Nor am I advocating an easy journey towards honesty. A bit like a childhood hero of mine - Harry Williams - I spent years in analysis discovering and managing myself! Saying that the locus of authority for who one is, and who one is going to be, lies within the self, does not mean that one does not believe in the mystery who is God, or in the need for ethical, spiritual and religious guidelines, or in the vital importance of community in which to shape and offer that authority. It does not mean that one is a mere individualist or selfish (as some of our most senior Bishops have got pretty near saying about gay and lesbian people who wish to be open about their lives). No-one in the end has authority over me, but I discover the meaning of my own authority in relation to others and to God and to the tradition of my faith and politics and family and so on. If you like I am saying dialogue in relationship is all – is where the Holy Spirit blows - but it has to be dialogue between real parts of the self, between groups able to speak honestly

and openly within the Church and using a theology which is humble, capable of cross fertilisation by other arts and sciences.

I was struck recently by some words of the poet Michael Rosen speaking on Desert Island Discs – of forming a poem he said “ If you fib, the poem won’t work”.

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Just occasionally as Dean of Women in the Two Cities Area of the London Diocese I met with other women and a small group of Bishops from the Ministry Division to talk about the development of the ministry of women as Bishops and Priests within the Church. Those meetings were always held in the context of the residential meetings of the House of Bishops. I thank God for those meetings because they gave me some tiny glimpse of what we are up against and why it might be difficult to talk about gender relations and sexual identity in the context of the Church. It looks as if the House of Bishops – all men of a certain age, educational level and marital status, having arrived in positions of considerable power and not dreaming of losing it – might find it very difficult to talk about the weather, if it caused conflict, never mind a wayward son or daughter, some vulnerability of their own, or the number of gay clergy they have in their diocese! The vulnerability involved in being human is not where it is at – believe me! It’s about having power and maintaining the order that sustains that power, world-wide if at all possible. Welcoming Church? They don’t even welcome women – one half of the human race! If they were really interested in the welcome of women then women would be in all the meetings in equal numbers – surely one does not need to be an ordained or consecrated woman to be worth listening to – surely just being different, representing the thoughts and life-experience of the other gender would do!

Understanding the conservatism of our leadership has helped me understand just a little why we are still wed to biblical pictures of gender elations, family and community life, and sexual relationships – pictures from 2000-3000 years ago and utterly different social milieus.

There has to be some strong reason to be so wed when the pictures given in the pages of the Bible are themselves so complex and changing over time that it becomes clear they cannot be used simply as a rule-book in sexual ethics.

There has to be some strong reason when one of the great treasures of the Church – the pastoral awareness of its priests – is being completely overlooked. It is not just in Soho that pastors encounter the gay person, the devastated and liberated divorcee, the young person or older person needing a period of sexual exploration and reflection to grow in to the next phase of their life, the contentedly childless couple, the lonely person - all questioning heterosexual monogamous marriage as the only holy sexual state, with, of course, that celibacy which priests are so magnificent at maintaining! It is in this real struggle for pastoral sensitivity and understanding that the vulnerable God is daily understood in the pastoral work of the Church of England – but in order to maintain the semblance of one mind across the world wide Anglican Communion in sexual ethics the wisdom springing from that that pastoral work is being lost.

There has to be some strong reason for maintaining so conservative a sexual ethic when our gifted lay – people – parents and teachers, nurses and psychologists for goodness sake, counsellors and artists and biologists, know human life to be other! Why even our children, from age 11 onwards onwards, know that life is different in terms of sexual identity and journey than is being openly spoken of in the Church.

There are so many problems springing from this lack of ability to talk openly about changes within our understanding of gender relations and sexual identity that it is hard to know where to start. But I want to mention four.

Firstly – unless we align gay with holy, clearly and firmly, we contribute to homophobia within our society. The child being bullied in the playground for being a pansy, the lesbian couple from the North who visited my Church recently after being literally stoned in their street at home, the gay man struggling with whether it is possible to be a Christian and gay; these do not hear the Church being open and welcoming towards gay laypeople – they hear the reiteration of what their family have probably already said to them – we love you, but only conditionally

Secondly - unless we align gay with holy, clearly and firmly, we cannot begin to talk to the gay and lesbian world about sexual ethics, we cannot challenge the ethics of “the scene” – we have earned for ourselves absolutely no place to stand. What is the pastoral point of that? Why is it more important for me, as the parish priest in Soho, to show unity with people across the Anglican Communion and not with members of my own parish on Old Compton Street who may be in need of blessing or help? Why does the one group matter more than the other? (Because of the need to maintain power with order, is the only answer I can think of!)

Thirdly – unless we align gay with holy, clearly and firmly, we are creating pastoral mess with the identity of gay priests in parishes. Again, it is as if we are permitted to study pastoral psychology, but not use it in relation to this issue. We study how projection is part of what priests and congregation become involved in. How is the gay or lesbian priest to be clear about who they are – breaking down a little the projection on to them of being apparently single and available sexually. So many dishonest relationships coalesce around the silencing of gay priests, helping neither priest nor layperson, let alone their partners, develop healthy mature relationships of integrity in their personal lives or in their parish.

Fourthly and lastly, what about being gay and lesbian and experiencing the Good News of God’s love, the Gospel? Strange that it is heterosexual married folk who are meant to possess a very special awareness of the nature of God’s love. As far as I am concerned, it is being loved by my partner over 15 years that has told me more about mercy, grace and forgiveness, and joy, happiness and creativity than any other relationship in which I have been known. Of course it has – this is not rocket science – it’s the wonder of being known long-term and loved. Perhaps especially when, as for many people who are gay and lesbian (though not all), that “being loved” business was rather messy and

conditional on not being gay in one's family of origin. If we are not allowed, in the Church, to speak of the very person or relationship which has helped one most live the Gospel, this repeats past hurts and old tortures instead of offering liberation and energy to create a new thing.

**The parish priests and lay people of the Church of England are in a unique place of pastoral availability and stored wisdom to enter the discussion of the complexity of human sexuality with thinkers in other disciplines – best not to start however with the House of Bishops. Probably more fruitful by far to work – if you will excuse the expression – from the bottom up!**

If you came to St Anne's Soho one Sunday morning while I was Rector of that Church you might well wonder what on earth I am talking about. One Sunday just before I left to take up my present post the organist couldn't find the music for the mass setting – and that in the middle of the mass not before – we were down to about 25 in number – and I had to preach about women being created from the rib of a man! Marvellous!

In other words we looked pretty normal, and quite fragile. But something was happening there to do with the transformation of the world – or at least that part of the world over which we had some agency – ourselves and our community and a tiny bit of the wider world.

It's partly to do with our history. Soho grew up like a rather overheated plant out of the Royal Hunting Fields after the great fire of London. Because the buildings were over-quickly raised then they were not very well built and the rich quickly moved out to open Soho up to floods of refugees, artists, small craftsmen tradeswomen, Jewish, French, Greek, Italian, the sex industry and now of course the pink pound. Diversity of culture and life-style has always been the name of the game. Though we are a tiny intense village we have to embrace diversity to manage to co-inhere together at all – on the school roll there are 139 children speaking myriad different languages.

It's partly to do with the nature of our Church building. It was built, after the Blitz had destroyed the former Church, 20 years ago, within a centre which has attached to it many community rooms. A very successful local amenity group is housed in the tower, film companies use the former choir vestry, and the church itself is tiny. This gives the effect of no one particular group having dominance. We had to dialogue to survive fruitfully on the one site. We didn't have to look for the community to come in to the Church – they are there already. It is more that we have to justify our usefulness to them, which is a challenging but fruitful way of life. What did they make of our togetherness, our rituals, our hospitality, our links with the wider world, did they ever need us or like us or appreciate talking with us? These were the acid tests of our identity.

In this living with difference we experienced the odd moment of romance and sentimentality, but more usually great difficulty. The one who is very different from me creates the gap, the absence, the wound, showing me that diversity is not the by-word for a comfortable life, but a real hard-edged place to be, of jarring and struggle and

forgiveness, as we inched our way towards the wholeness in complexity for which we are made. But we were getting there! We had some groups in which the Bible was studied by intellectuals and those with little formal education, some parties at which the London Gay Men's Chorus sang to the old ladies (who staring at their beauty are often heard to mutter wistfully as they struggle to comprehend – "What a waste!"), some lunches at which the violently anti-church parent could see that we don't wear crosses or horns and might just might be quite alternative ourselves, and so on. It was a slow haul but one going on in different ways and places across the parishes and meetings of all our churches.

The Orthodox theologian Nicolas Berdyaev wrote that we "need a multitude of modern saints, people willing to take upon themselves the burden of this complex world"

Part of that burden is learning to wait for something to emerge rather than dictating what will come. One aspect of the present love of order within the Church is that we create guidelines for growth, numbers for viability, clarity of Good News to tell the world. What I think actually happens in our churches is that something emerges and we don't quite ever know what it is going to be. But its main shape seems to be a place to belong, a building used for dialogue and debate and a community offering acceptance and the bonds of affection against all the odds! Only when folk get there, to knowing and feeling that they are accepted, do they tentatively begin to explore if they might need to change. It's not a starting point – change – but a response to love, which is the main thing we have to offer.

So, to summarise my thoughts – what we have to offer is ourselves, honestly engaged with the Gospel and the world. We have to offer the willingness to enter dialogue with other people and other knowledge bases, not from a position of power or coercion to convert, but from a position of need and desire. I think that as religious people with a concept of the Kingdom of God within and without we have to offer debate about the locus of authority in making decisions about our lives. I believe that from our pastoral praxis and from the wealth of laypeople with knowledge of the human sciences we could be contributing far more than we are about the complex phenomenon which is human sexuality. And I believe that we have valuable spaces in which people can find in us the love of God and a belonging and acceptance which may trigger world transforming change

**To end then, I don't believe the world is uninterested in Christianity and sexuality – it is interested to find people of integrity, to engage in dialogue, to debate where authority is to be found, to embrace the problems and opportunities of realising our sexual complexity, to be able to dip in and out of, or rest in, places of belonging. It is perhaps we who need to change! Perhaps God is asking us to admit that we are as frightened of real encounter with other human beings as anyone else. And perhaps if we start there we may learn to be less afraid, we may start to sing in the rain, and know ourselves to be already a multitude of modern saints able to take upon ourselves the burden of this complex world.**

## **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF CSCS HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2009 AT ST MATTHEWS'S CHURCH, WESTMINSTER**

**Present:** Jane Fraser (Chair), Daphne Cook (Treasurer), John Cook, Anthony Woollard, Martin Pendergast, Mike Egan, Hazel Barkham, Heather Barfoot, Michael Moran (joined at meeting) plus three non-members.

**Apologies:** John Gladwin, David Gamble, Roberta Rominger, Peter Selby, Colin Coward, Hugh Bain, Tony Crowe.

**Minutes of 2008 AGM** having been circulated in *CSCS News* were taken as read.

**Chair's Report** – see report attached to these minutes.

**Treasurer's Report** – see report attached to these minutes. It was noted that the balance at the end of 2008 was £4633 and that 2009 subscriptions were already coming in well. Resources would therefore permit the reimbursement of participants' expenses at the meeting with theological educators on 16 March (see Chair's Report).

**Discussion following reports:** Members reluctantly noted the possibility that CSCS might be unable to function after 2010, but felt that both its ecumenical focus and its wide-spectrum remit on Christianity and sexuality must not be lost in any successor arrangements. A number of initiatives were in hand which needed to be progressed, including the proposed 2010 joint conference with Inclusive Church provisionally entitled "Consuming Passions", and the second conference on Homophobia/Transphobia and Human Rights on 16 May 2009 which had already benefited at the planning stage from a CSCS input wider than that of LGCM and might also be worthy of some financial support. Some of these initiatives, as well as that relating to theological education (see Chair's Report) might well have implications for work by some appropriate organisation beyond 2010. There needed to be an evaluation of CSCS members' priorities regarding the use of CSCS reserves, especially if CSCS had to be wound up, and the services which CSCS at present provided which might conceivably be taken on by some successor organisation. It was agreed to include a questionnaire to members in the next edition of *CSCS News*.

**Election of officers and Committee:** In the absence of other nominations, Jane Fraser and Daphne Cook were deemed elected as Chair and Treasurer respectively for one more year only, and John Cook, Martin Pendergast, Anthony Woollard and Michael Moran as members of Committee. Similarly Mike Egan was deemed reappointed examiner of accounts.

### **REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

*Jane Fraser*

As in the previous two years, CSCS has struggled to meet its aims of providing opportunities for sexuality to be discussed honestly and openly and to help others in the churches to provide similar opportunities. Personally, I see the decline in active interest and participation in CSCS as due to a growing polarisation of Christian thinking on sexuality issues. It is also noticeable that a significant number of our members is involved in more than one such group, including Inclusive Church, WATCH, Changing Attitude and LGCM.

However, we have continued to provide a thoughtful voice in the churches through the medium of our support for the distribution of the Journal, *Theology and Sexuality*. This continues to offer a forum for an academic, theological understanding of such matters. At a more accessible level, our *CSCS Newsletter*, under the extremely able editorship of Anthony Woollard, has gathered an impressive array of articles, comment, reviews and correspondence for the stimulation, guidance and support of our membership. We are enormously grateful to Anthony for the diligent way he has worked on this aspect of our ministry.

Other members of your committee have also worked hard to promote the aims of CSCS. Not least of these is Daphne Cook, who has managed our finances to keep us solvent and self-supporting, without the need for any outside funding. With John, her husband, she has offered hospitality and support for our committee meetings. Their network of contacts and the experience of a working lifetime for the Church have been of great value, too. I must also thank Michael Egan for examining our accounts and assisting Daphne with any difficulties she encountered and Philip Gardner for his oversight of our CSCS website. This brings me to note how much we also owe a debt of gratitude to the experience and vast network of contacts given to us by Martin Pendergast, not simply from the Roman Catholic Church but also in the secular field around sexuality issues. His support to me, via email and telephone contact has been invaluable.

The main focus of our work this year has been to follow up on the decision made at the last AGM, that we should try to offer the experience and expertise to be found within CSCS and similar Christian organisations to the education and training of those preparing for lay or ordained ministry. You expressed concern about the lack of preparedness of ministers in pastoral care around sexual relationships and behaviour. Although it has taken us a whole year to do so, we have finally succeeded in gathering an impressive group of people from the Church of England, the United Reformed Church, the Roman Catholic Church and Methodists, all responsible for sexuality education and training in theological colleges, seminaries and schools for ministry in this country. We shall be meeting in March at The Queens College Birmingham as guests of the Principal, The Revd. Canon Dr David Hewlett. We shall, of course, report on the outcome of this meeting in the *CSCS Newsletter*. We have benefited from the advice, information and contacts of our Patrons, The Rt. Revd. John Gladwin and The Revd. David Gamble, our Matron, The Revd. Roberta Rominger. Each has expressed their regret that they were not able to attend today but have sent us their good wishes for this event.

This brings me to what we hope will be an outcome of the project I have just described – growing links and collaboration with other organisations with a similar ethos. We were delighted that The Revd. Clare Herbert was able to contribute to our thinking around inclusive sexual ethics and pastoral care today. This link with Inclusive Church has been a two-way process, as Anthony Woollard and I have been involved in helping to organise a joint conference in 2010. Anthony and I also serve on the Council of the Modern Churchpeople's Union, Anthony as an elected member and your Chair as a CSCS observer. Your Chair is an active member of the General Synod of the Church of England where issues of sexuality and gender are never completely absent from the agenda.

Finally, I have the difficult task of reporting to you that I shall no longer be your Chair by the end of this coming year. The pressure on my time and my home life now that my husband has retired and I am meant to be semi-retired, has become too great. John and Daphne Cook, for similar reasons, have expressed a need to retire. We have seen no-one willing to come forward to take our places and this will mean that CSCS, in the form that it was constituted, cannot continue. We will take forward the project we have begun and we will discuss with our partner organisations how our mission might continue under other headings.

It is with great sadness that I have to present this development to you but I ask for your prayers, your advice and your forbearance as we work towards this conclusion. At the same time, I want to offer my thanks and those of the Committee, to all those who, over the years have supported us and our work.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

#### **ACCOUNTS YEAR ENDED 31.12.08**

	2008	2007
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions	1794.00	1522.50
Conference fees	210.00	325.00
Interest	48.52	49.97
Tax refund	1093.04	0
Donations	0	435.04
	<b>3145.56</b>	<b>2332.47</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Journals	1166.00	1495.83
CSCS News	342.28	384.26
Conference	176.19	736.16
Website	124.43	159.80
Committee/secretarial	271.75	132.87
	<b>2080.65</b>	<b>2908.92</b>
<b>Surplus/(shortfall)</b>	<b>1064.91</b>	<b>(576.45)</b>
<b>Opening accumulated fund</b>	3568.87	4145.32
<b>Closing accumulated fund</b>	<b>4633.78</b>	<b>3568.87</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
Current account	2490.33	1455.30
Deposit account	2143.45	2113.57

In my opinion the Accounts fairly present the financial position of CSCS as at 31 December 2008 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended, and are in accordance with the underlying accounting records.

Michael P W Egan MA FCA MSI

## **IN MEMORIAM – MARCELLA ALTHAUS-REID**

Theology lost an original voice on 20 February when Professor Marcella Althaus-Reid died at Marie Curie Hospice in Edinburgh, Scotland. Those who appreciate creative, bold theology are in her debt.

Marcella was Argentine by birth with a deep commitment to liberation theology. She studied at ISEDET, the Protestant theological faculty in Buenos Aires, and received her doctorate at the University of St. Andrews. She insisted that issues of body and sexuality need to be interwoven with other liberation concerns. Feminist and queer commitments informed her unique and important work.

She held the Chair of Contextual Theology in the School of Divinity, at the University of Edinburgh. She was the author of the widely acclaimed *Indecent Theology*, among many other books.

Marcella spoke to an Annual Conference of CSCS some years ago and CSCS has always regarded her as a pioneer in her field. Her work will echo for generations to come.

**This Newsletter is produced for CSCS**  
**The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality**  
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**The next issue is expected in Autumn 2009 – contributions invited by 1  
September**

**Please send any enquiries about/contributions to the Newsletter to:**

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## QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE FUTURE OF CSCS

**The future of CSCS as a separate organisation now depends on our finding new people to take on responsibilities in the Committee – responsibilities which could be very light indeed but are practically vital, and indeed legally vital for us as a charity. If we cannot do that, we must wind up our affairs, pass our reserves on to some organisation with objects close to our own, and also seek to pass on our remit to that or possibly some other organisation. Please express your views on these issues below. Answer EITHER question 1 OR question 2.**

1. I am prepared to consider Committee membership, because I want to see CSCS continuing as an ecumenical organisation devoted to debate and study across the whole area of Christianity and sexuality.

2. I recognise that CSCS may not have an independent future and would be prepared to see it “merged” with a sister organisation.

**If you have answered question 2, please choose one of the following – bearing in mind that we have links with all three organisations named, but that none has a remit identical to that of CSCS and that not all are ecumenical (and also that any decision by CSCS is dependent on the views of the body concerned).**

3. I suggest that if necessary CSCS be re-absorbed within, and its reserves be assigned to, LGCM (the original founding body, which is ecumenical, but whose remit is arguably rather narrower and more oriented to campaigning).

4. I suggest that if necessary CSCS be absorbed within, and its reserves be assigned to, the Modern Churchpeople’s Union (a mainly Anglican body which is primarily a learned society but with a remit much wider than that of CSCS).

5. I suggest that if necessary CSCS be absorbed within, and its reserves be assigned to, Inclusive Church (again a body focused on Anglicanism with a much wider remit than that of CSCS, which was initially set up as an umbrella campaigning body).

6. I suggest that if necessary CSCS be absorbed within, and its reserves assigned to,..... (Please name another preferred “host”, eg Changing Attitude, and state your reasons.)

**Whether you have answered questions 1 or 2, please state below what is important to you in the continuing work of CSCS or any organisation with which it might be merged. Please rank in importance from 1 to as far down as you wish to go.**

- Networking at national level with other bodies across the whole field of Christianity and sexuality.
  - Dialogue with theological educators.
  - Regular newsletters on all aspects of Christianity and sexuality.
  - Conferences or other meetings to discuss aspects of Christianity and sexuality not discussed elsewhere (please feel free to enlarge on possible topics).
- 
- Access to the journal *Theology and Sexuality* at a preferential rate.
  - Opportunities for regional/local networking at a personal level with others concerned with relevant issues.
  - Provision of speakers on relevant issues at events organised by other bodies.
  - Briefing of Church decision-makers on relevant issues.
  - Maintenance of a media profile on relevant issues.
  - Other activities (please specify).

**Thank you for responding to this questionnaire.**

**Please return to Anthony Woollard, 1 Chestnut Walk, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6HG ([awoollard@joyousgard.org.uk](mailto:awoollard@joyousgard.org.uk)), by not later than Friday 5 June.**